POST GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMME (CBCS)

M.A. in ENGLISH

SEMESTER – III

DSE – 301

EUROPEAN LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

Self-Learning Material

DIRECTORATE OF OPEN & DISTANCE LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF KALYANI

KALYANI-741235, WEST BENGAL

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Directorate of Open and Distance Learning, University of Kalyani

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Director's Message

Satisfying the varied needs of distance learners, overcoming the obstacle of distance and reaching the unreached students are the threefold functions catered by Open and Distance Learning (ODL) systems. The onus lies on writers, editors, production professionals and other personnel involved in the process to overcome the challenges inherent to curriculum design and production of relevant Self Learning Materials (SLMs). At the University of Kalyani, a dedicated team under the able guidance of the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor has invested its best efforts, professionally and in keeping with the demands of Post Graduate CBCS Programmes in Distance Mode to devise a self-sufficient curriculum for each course offered by the Directorate of Open and Distance Learning (DODL), University of Kalyani. Development of printed SLMs for students admitted to the DODL within a limited time to cater to the academic requirements of the Course as per standards set by the Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, India under Open and Distance Mode UGC Regulations, 2021 had been our endeavour. We are happy to have achieved our goal. Utmost care and precision have been ensured in the development of the SLMs, making them useful to the learners, besides avoiding errors as far as practicable. Further suggestions from the stakeholders in this would be welcome. During the production process of the SLMs, the team continuously received positive stimulations and feedback from Professor (Dr.) Amalendu Bhunia, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, University of Kalyani, who kindly accorded directions, encouragements and suggestions, offered constructive criticism to develop it within proper requirements. We, gracefully, acknowledge his inspiration and guidance. Sincere gratitude is due to the respective chairpersons as well as each and every member of PG-BOS (DODL), University of Kalyani. Heartfelt gratitude is also due to the faculty members of the DODL, subject-experts serving at the University Post Graduate departments and also to the authors and academicians whose academic contributions have enriched the SLMs. We humbly acknowledge their valuable academic contributions. I would especially like to convey gratitude to all other University dignitaries and personnel involved either at the conceptual or operational level at the DODL, University of Kalyani. Their persistent and coordinated efforts have resulted in the compilation of comprehensive, learner-friendly, flexible texts that meet the curriculum requirements of the Post Graduate Programme through the Distance Mode.

Director

Directorate of Open and Distance Learning

University of Kalyani

DSE – 301

THE EUROPEAN LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

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LE PERE GORIOT

BY

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

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UNIT 1 (A): INTRODUCTION TO HONORÉ DE BALZAC – LIFE AND WORKS

Honoré de Balzac, original name Honoré Balssa (1799-1850) was a French playwright and novelist who produced a vast number of novels and short stories collectively called *La Comédie humaine* (Trans. The Human Comedy). He helped to establish the traditional form of the novel and is generally considered to be one of the greatest novelists of all time.

Balzac's father, born Bernard-François Balssa, set off for Paris in 1760 with only a Louis coin in his pocket, intent on improving his social standing. Paris was then the capital of European intellectual and artistic life. He worked in the civil service for 43 years under Louis XVI and Napoleon. He had also changed his name to the nobler-sounding "Balzac". Honoré's mother came from a family of prosperous Parisian cloth merchants. Balzac was sent to school at the Oratorian Grammar School in Vendôme, where he studied for seven years. He had difficulty adapting to the rote style of memorizing and learning at school. As a result, he was frequently sent to the "alcove", a punishment cell reserved for disobedient students. The janitor at the school, when asked later if he remembered Honoré, replied: "Remember M. Balzac? I should think I do! I had the honour of escorting him to the dungeon more than a hundred times!" Still, this time alone gave the boy ample freedom to read every book which came his way. Balzac worked these scenes from his boyhood—as he did many aspects of his life and the lives of those around him—into *La Comédie humaine*.

In 1814, the Balzac family moved to Paris, and Honoré was sent to private tutors and schools for the next two and a half years. This was an unhappy time in his life, during which he attempted suicide on a bridge over the river Loire. In 1816, Balzac entered the Sorbonne, the University of Paris, where he was taught by many acclaimed professors. Once his studies were completed, Balzac was persuaded by his father to pursue Law. During this time Balzac began to understand the vagaries of human nature. After three years he left the profession due to utter despise and announced his intention to become a writer. In 1820, Balzac completed the five-act verse tragedy *Cromwell*. Although it pales in comparison with his later works, some critics consider it a good-quality text. He followed this effort by starting (but never finishing) three novels: *Sténie, Falthurne,* and *Corsino*. During this time, he already aimed at a literary career, but as the writer of Cromwell and other tragic plays, he was utterly unsuccessful. He then began

writing novels filled with mystic and philosophical speculations before turning to the production of potboilers—gothic, humorous, historical novels—written under composite pseudonyms. In 1821, Balzac met the enterprising Auguste Le Poitevin, who convinced the author to write short stories, which Le Poitevin would then sell to publishers. Balzac quickly turned to longer works, and by 1826 he had written nine novels, all published under pseudonyms and often produced in collaboration with other writers. For example, the scandalous novel *Vicaire des Ardennes* (1822) – was banned for its depiction of nearly-incestuous relations. These books were pot-boiler novels, designed to sell quickly and titillate audiences.

During this time Balzac wrote two pamphlets in support of primogeniture and the Society of Jesus. The latter, regarding the Jesuits, illustrated his lifelong admiration for the Catholic Church. In the preface to *La Comédie Humaine*, he wrote: "Christianity, above all, Catholicism, being ... a complete system for the repression of the depraved tendencies of man, is the most powerful element of social order". In the late 1820s, Balzac dabbled in several business ventures as a publisher, printer, and owner of a type foundry all of which failed miserably. Balzac borrowed money from his family and friends but his inexperience and lack of capital caused his ruin in these trades. In 1828, he was narrowly saved from bankruptcy and was left with debts of more than 60,000 francs. From then on his life was to be one of mounting debts and almost incessant toil.

After the collapse of his businesses, Balzac travelled to Brittany. Two works of 1829 brought Balzac to the brink of success. *Les Chouans*, is a historical novel about the Breton peasants called Chouans who took part in a royalist insurrection against Revolutionary France in 1799. Soon afterwards, around the time of his father's death, Balzac wrote *El Verdugo*—about a 30-year-old man who kills his father (Balzac was 30 years old at the time). This was the first work signed as "Honoré de Balzac". He followed his father in the surname Balzac but added the aristocratic-sounding nobility particle to help him fit into a respected society. His “La Physiologie du Mariage” (The Physiology of Marriage) is a humorous and satirical essay on the subject of marital infidelity, encompassing both its causes and its cure. The six stories in his “Scènes de la vie privée” (Scenes from Private Life) further increased his reputation. These stories are for the most part psychological studies of girls in conflict with parental authority. The minute attention he gave to describing domestic background in his works anticipated the spectacularly detailed societal observations of his later Parisian studies.

From this point forward Balzac spent much of his time in Paris. He began to frequent some of the best-known Parisian salons of the day and redoubled his efforts to set himself up as a dazzling figure in society. To most people, he seemed full of exuberant vitality, talkative, jovial and robustious, egoistic, credulous, and boastful. He adopted for his own use the armorial bearings of an ancient noble family with which he had no connection and assumed the honorific particle de. He was avid for fame, fortune, and love but was above all conscious of his own genius. He also began to have love affairs with fashionable or aristocratic women at this time, finally gaining that first-hand understanding of mature women that is so evident in his novels. Between 1828 and 1834 Balzac led a tumultuous existence, spending his earnings in advance as a dandy and man-about-town. A fascinating raconteur, he was fairly well-received in society. But social ostentation was only a relaxation from phenomenal bouts of work—14 to 16 hours spent writing at his table. Balzac's work habits were legendary. He wrote from 1 am to 8 am every morning and sometimes even longer. Balzac could write very rapidly. His preferred method was to eat a light meal at five or six in the afternoon, and then sleep until midnight. He then rose and wrote for many hours, fuelled by innumerable cups of black coffee. He often worked for fifteen hours or more at a stretch; he claimed to have once worked for 48 hours with only three hours of rest in the middle. 1831 saw the success of *La Peau de chagrin* (The Wild Ass's Skin or The Magic Skin), a fable-like tale about a despondent young man named Raphaël de Valentin who finds an animal skin which promises great power and wealth. He obtains these things but loses the ability to manage them.

He revealed in a letter to his sister, about his entering into an illicit affair with fellow writer Maria Du Fresnay, who was then aged 24. Her marriage to a considerably older man (Charles du Fresnay, Mayor of Sartrouville) had been a failure from the outset. In this letter, Balzac also reveals that the young woman had just come to tell him she was pregnant with his child. In 1834, eight months after the event, Maria Du Fresnay's daughter by Balzac was born. Balzac had also long been suspected of being attracted to males as well. When the official records of homosexuals once maintained by the Paris police were finally released, his name was found listed. In 1832, Balzac became friendly with Éveline Hanska, a Polish countess who was married to an elderly Ukrainian landowner. She, like many other women, had written to Balzac expressing admiration for his writings. They met twice in Switzerland in 1833—the second time in Geneva, where they became lovers—and again in Vienna in 1835. They agreed to marry when her husband died, and so Balzac continued to conduct his courtship of her by correspondence; the resulting *Lettres à l'étrangère* ("Letters to a Foreigner"), which appeared

posthumously (4 vol., 1889–1950), are an important source of information for the history both of Balzac's life and of his work.

To clear his debts and put himself in a position to marry Madame Hanska now became Balzac's great incentive. He was at the peak of his creative power. In the period between 1832–35, he produced more than 20 works. In 1832, Balzac conceived the idea for an enormous series of books that would paint a panoramic portrait of "all aspects of society". Although he originally called it *Etudes des Mœurs* (literally 'Studies of manners', or 'The Ways of the World') it eventually became known as *La Comédie Humaine*, and he included in it all the fiction that he had published in his lifetime under his own name. This was to be Balzac's life work and his greatest achievement. In 1833, Balzac released *Eugénie Grandet*, his first best-seller. The tale of a young lady who inherits her father's miserliness also became the most critically acclaimed book of his career. It is followed by *La Duchesse de Langeais*, arguably the most sublime of his novels. *Le Père Goriot* (Old Father Goriot, 1835) was his next success, in which Balzac transposes the story of King Lear to 1820s Paris in order to rage at a society bereft of all love save the love of money. The centrality of a father in this novel matches Balzac's own position—not only as a mentor to his troubled young secretary, Jules Sandeau, but also the fact that he had fathered a child, Marie-Caroline Du Fresnay, with his otherwise-married lover, Maria Du Fresnay, who had been his source of inspiration for Eugénie Grandet. Among the shorter works were *Le Colonel Chabert* (1832), *Le Curé de Tours* (1832; The Vicar of Tours), the trilogy of stories entitled *Histoire des treize* (1833–35; History of the Thirteen), and *Gobseck* (1835). Between 1836 and 1839 he wrote *Le Cabinet des antiques* (1839), the first two parts of another masterpiece, *Illusions perdues* (1837–43; Lost Illusions), *César Birotteau* (1837), and *La Maison Nucingen* (1838; The Firm of Nucingen). Between 1832 and 1837 he also published three sets of *Contes drolatiques* (Droll Stories). These stories, Rabelaisian in theme, are written with great verve and gusto in an ingenious pastiche of 16th-century language. During the 1830s he also wrote a number of philosophical novels dealing with mystical, pseudoscientific, and other exotic themes. Among these are *La Peau de chagrin* (1831; The Wild Ass's Skin), *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* (1831; The Unknown Masterpiece), *Louis Lambert* (1834), *La Recherche de l'absolu* (1834; The Quest of the Absolute), and *Séraphîta* (1834–35).

Marshal Hański died in 1841, and his widow and her admirer finally had the chance to pursue their affections. After a series of financial setbacks, health problems and objections from Tsar Nicholas I, the couple finally received permission to wed. In late April the newlyweds set off

for Paris. His health deteriorated on the way. They arrived in the French capital on 20 May, his fifty-first birthday. Five months after his wedding, on Sunday, 18 August 1850, Balzac died.

In all these varied works Balzac emerged as the supreme observer and chronicler of contemporary French society. These novels are unsurpassed for their narrative drive, their large casts of vital, diverse, and interesting characters, and their obsessive interest in and examination of virtually all spheres of life: the contrast between provincial and metropolitan manners and customs; the commercial spheres of banking, publishing, and industrial enterprise; the worlds of art, literature, and high culture; politics and partisan intrigue; romantic love in all its aspects; and the intricate social relations and scandals among the aristocracy and the haute bourgeoisie. No theme is more typically Balzacian than that of the ambitious young provincial fighting for advancement in the competitive world of Paris. Balzac admired those individuals who were ruthless, astute, and, above all, successful in thrusting their way up the social and economic scale at all costs. He was especially attracted by the theme of the individual in conflict with society: the adventurer, the scoundrel, the unscrupulous financier, and the criminal. Frequently his villains are more vigorous and interesting than his virtuous characters. Owing to his keen observation of detail and unfiltered representation of society, Balzac is regarded as one of the founders of realism in European literature.

UNIT 1 (B): *LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE* OF HONORÉ DE BALZAC

La Comédie humaine (The Human Comedy) is Honoré de Balzac's multi-volume collection of interlinked novels and stories depicting French society in the period of the Restoration (1815–30) and the July Monarchy (1830–48). *La Comédie humaine* consists of 90 finished works (stories, novels, or analytical essays) and 46 unfinished works (some of which exist only as titles).

The year 1834 marks a climax in Balzac's career, for by then he had become totally conscious of his great plan to group his individual novels so that they would comprehend the whole of contemporary society in a diverse but unified series of books. Also in 1834 the idea of using "reappearing characters" matured. Balzac was to establish a pool of characters from which he would constantly and repeatedly draw, thus adding a sense of solidarity and coherence to the *Comédie humaine*. A certain character would reappear—now in the forefront, now in the background, of different fictions—in such a way that the reader could gradually form a full

picture of him. Balzac's use of this device places him among the originators of the modern novel cycle. In the end, the total number of named characters in the *Comédie humaine* is estimated to have reached 2,472, with a further 566 unnamed characters.

The title of the series is usually considered an allusion to Dante's Divine Comedy. While Ferdinand Brunetière, the famous French literary critic, suggests that it may stem from poems by Alfred de Musset or Alfred de Vigny. While Balzac sought the comprehensive scope of Dante, his title indicates the worldly, human concerns of a realist novelist. The stories are placed in a variety of settings, with characters reappearing in multiple stories. By 1837 Balzac had written much more, and by 1840 he had hit upon a Dantesque title for the whole: *La Comédie humaine*. He negotiated with a consortium of publishers for an edition under this name, 17 volumes of which appeared between 1842 and 1848, including a famous foreword written in 1842. In 1845, having new works to include and many others in the project, he began preparing for another complete edition. A "definitive edition" was published, in 24 volumes, between 1869 and 1876. The total number of novels and novellas comprised in the *Comédie humaine* is roughly 90.

The *Comédie humaine* was the result of a slow evolution. The first works of Balzac were written without any global plan (Les Chouans is a historical novel; Physiologie du marriage is an analytical study of marriage), but by 1830 Balzac began to group his first novels (Sarrasine, Gobseck) into a series entitled Scènes de la vie privée ("Scenes from Private Life"). In 1833, with the publication of Eugénie Grandet, Balzac envisioned a second series entitled "Scènes de la vie de province" (Scenes from Provincial Life). Most likely in this same year, Balzac came upon the idea of having characters reappear from novel to novel, and the first novel to use this technique was *Le Père Goriot* (1834–35).

In a letter written to Madame Hanska in 1834, Balzac decided to reorganize his works into three larger groups. The three sections were:

"Etudes de Moeurs au XIXe siècle" (Studies of Manners in the 19th Century)

"Etudes philosophiques" (Philosophical Studies)

"Etudes analytiques" ("Analytic Studies")

Études analytiques ("Analytic Studies"), would deal with the principles governing human life and society; Études philosophiques ("Philosophical Studies"), would reveal the causes determining human action; and Études de moeurs ("Studies of Manners"), would show the effects of those causes and study how these effects touch on all genders, social classes, age and professions of people, and themselves to be divided into six kinds of scènes—private, provincial, Parisian, political, military, and country life. This entire project resulted in a total of 12 volumes (1834–37). In 1839, in a letter to his publisher, Balzac mentioned for the first time the expression *Comédie humaine*, and this title is in the contract he signed in 1841. The publication of the *Comédie humaine* in 1842 was preceded by an important preface or "avant-propos" describing his major principles and the work's overall structure. In 1842, Balzac wrote a preface (an "Avant-propos") to the whole ensemble in which he explained his method and the collection's structure. Motivated by the work of biologists Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, Georges Cuvier and most importantly Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, Balzac explains that he seeks to understand "social species" in the way a biologist would analyze "zoological species", and to accomplish this he intends to describe the interrelations of men, women and things. Balzac actually believed that his grand design and enterprise were something of a quasi-scientific study or research project.

Balzac then gives an extensive list of writers and works that influenced him, including Sir Walter Scott, François Rabelais and Miguel de Cervantes. He then describes his writer's role as a "secretary" who is transcribing society's "history"; moreover, he posits that he is interested in something that no previous historian has attempted: a history of "moeurs" (customs, manners and morals). He also notes his desire to go behind the surface of events, to show the reasons and causes for social phenomena. Balzac then professes his belief in two profound truths — religion and monarchy — and his concern for understanding the individual in the context of his family. Balzac's intended collection was never finished. In 1845, Balzac wrote a complete catalogue of the ensemble which includes works he started or envisioned but never finished.

SOURCES OF THE *COMÉDIE HUMAINE*

Because of its volume and complexity, the *Comédie humaine* touches on the major literary genres in fashion in the first half of the 19th century.

The historical novel

The historical novel was a European phenomenon in the first half of the 19th century — largely through the works of Sir Walter Scott, James Fenimore Cooper and, in France, Alexandre Dumas, père and Victor Hugo. Balzac's first novel Le Chouans was inspired by this vogue and tells of the rural inhabitants of Brittany during the revolution with Cooper-like descriptions of their dress and manners. Although the bulk of the *Comédie humaine* takes place during the Restoration and the July Monarchy, there are several novels which take place during the French Revolution and others which take place in the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, including "About Catherine de Medici" and "The Elixir of Long Life".

The popular novel

Balzac's later works are decidedly influenced by the genre of the serialised novel popular at the time, especially the works of Eugène Sue which concentrate on depicting the secret worlds of crime and vice that hide below the surface of the French society, and by the ethos of melodrama typical of these part-works.

Fantasy

Many of Balzac's shorter works have elements taken from the popular "roman noir" or Gothic novel, but often the fantastic elements are used for very different purposes in Balzac's work.

Swedenborg

Several of Balzac's characters, particularly Louis Lambert, traverse mystical crises and/or develop syncretic spiritual philosophies about human energy and action that are largely modelled on the life and work of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). As depicted in his works, Balzac's spiritual philosophy suggests that individuals have a limited quantity of spiritual energy and that this energy is dissipated through creative or intellectual work or physical activity (including sex), and this is made emblematic in his philosophical tale La Peau de

chagrin, in which a magical wild ass's skin confers on its owner unlimited powers, but shrinks each time it is used in science.

MAJOR THEMES OF THE COLLECTION

The following are some of the major themes that recur throughout the various volumes of the *Comédie humaine*:

France after the Revolution

Balzac frequently bemoans the loss of a pre-Revolutionary society of honour which has now become — especially after the fall of Charles X of France and the arrival of the July Monarchy — a society dominated by money.

Money and Power

"At the origin of every fortune lies a crime" – this motif recurs constantly in the *Comédie humaine* as a sign of French collective guilt at the horrors of the Revolution (and most notably by the death of Louis XVI of France). The other source of power is rank. People of good blood aspire to a title, while people with titles aspire to the peerage.

Social success

Two young men dominate the *Comédie humaine*: Lucien de Rubempré and Eugène de Rastignac. Both are talented but poor youths from the provinces, both attempt to achieve greatness in society and both come into contact with Vautrin, but only Rastignac succeeds while Lucien de Rubempré ends his life by his own hand in jail in Paris. The difference in outcome is partly explained by Balzac's views on heredity: Rastignac comes from a noble family, while only Rubempré's mother comes from a noble family (he had to obtain royal permission to use his mother's family name instead of his father's name). This deficit is compounded by the fact that his mother had not only married a commoner far beneath her in rank, but she had also performed menial labour to support herself when her husband died.

Paternity

The *Comédie humaine* frequently portrays the complex emotional, social and financial relationships between fathers and their children, and between father figures and their mentors, and these relationships are metaphorically linked as well with issues of nationhood (the king as father, regicide), nobility (bloodlines, family names), history (parental secrets), wealth (the origin of parental fortunes, dowries) and artistic creation (the writer or artist as father of the work of art). Father Goriot is perhaps the most famous and tragic of these father figures.

Women, Society and Sex

The representation of women in the *Comédie Humaine* is extremely varied — spanning material from both the romantic and pulp traditions — and includes idealized women (like Pauline in La Peau de chagrin or Eugénie Grandet), the tragic prostitute Esther Gobsek (Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes), the worldly daughters of Goriot and other women in society who can help their lovers advance, the masculine and domineering Cousine Bette, and the alluring and impossible love object (Foedora in La Peau de chagrin or the heroine of La fille aux yeux d'or). The latter category also includes several lesbian or bisexual characters.

Balzac regarded himself as a historian of manners, basing the wide scope of his scheme on the example of Walter Scott, whose work was popular throughout Europe at that time. He famously wrote, "French society would be the real author. I should only be the secretary." The whole is an examination of French society from the French Revolution to the eve of the Revolution of 1848, in which Balzac analyzed the underlying principles of this constantly developing world. Balzac ranged back and forth, often within the same novel, from the philosophical to the social, the economic, and the legal; from Paris to the provinces; and from the summit of society to the petite bourgeoisie. No theme is more typically Balzacian than that of the ambitious young provincial fighting for advancement in the competitive world of Paris. Balzac was both fascinated and appalled by the French social system of his time, in which the bourgeois values of material acquisitiveness and gain were steadily replacing what he viewed as the more stable moral values of the old-time aristocracy. He also believed that his work should vigorously exalt the Catholic Church and the Monarchy. But he also thought that it was his duty to show the real social forces at work as people fought for their existence. Given the interlocking nature of these works and taking into account the huge scale of his endeavour, it is not surprising that the scheme was never completed. Balzac was dead by the age of fifty-two.

UNIT 1 (C): *GORIOT* – INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND RECEPTION OF THE NOVEL

Le Père Goriot, (trans." Old Father Goriot") is a novel by Honoré de Balzac, originally published in serial form in the Revue de Paris during the winter of 1834-35 and published in book form in 1835. The novel is considered one of the best works of Balzac's panoramic series *La Comédie humaine* ("The Human Comedy"), and it was the first serious novel by the author which featured characters that would reappear in later novels, a technique that distinguishes Balzac's fiction. Set in Paris in 1819, this pessimistic case study of bourgeois society's ills after the French Revolution tells the intertwined stories of three characters: Eugène de Rastignac, an ambitious but naive and penniless young law student, a mysterious criminal-in-hiding named Vautrin, and old Goriot, a doting father who sacrifices everything for his daughters. The novel takes place during the Bourbon Restoration, which brought profound changes to French society. The struggle by individuals to secure a higher social status is a major theme in the book. The city of Paris also impresses itself on the characters – especially young Rastignac, who grew up in the provinces of southern France. Balzac analyzes, through Goriot and others, the nature of family and marriage, providing a pessimistic view of these institutions. The novel was released to mixed reviews. Some critics praised the author for his complex characters and attention to detail; others condemned him for his many depictions of corruption and greed. It gave rise to the French expression "Rastignac", a social climber willing to use any means to better his situation.

BACKGROUND OF THE NOVEL

Historical Background

The novel draws on several historical events that shook the French social order in short succession: the French Revolution, which led to the First Republic; Napoleon's rise, the fall and the return of the House of Bourbon.

Le Père Goriot is set during the Bourbon Restoration, which is dated between Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1814 and the popular uprisings of the July Revolution in 1830. During

this period reigned Louis XVIII and Charles X, both brothers of Louis XVI (who'd been executed during the French Revolution in 1793). These kings instituted a constitutional monarchy which, unlike its absolutist pre-Revolutionary counterpart, incorporated some checks on the monarch's power. Otherwise, the monarchy retained some of the Revolution's changes, such as the central role of Paris in French governance and culture, which is reflected in the novel.

Another aspect of the Bourbon Restoration which the novel reflects is the prominence of a new aristocracy which arose after the Revolution. It depicts the mounting tension between the aristocracy, which had returned with King Louis XVIII, and the emerging bourgeoisie produced by the Industrial Revolution.

In this period, France saw a tightening of social structures, with a lower class burdened with overwhelming poverty. By one estimate, almost three-quarters of Parisians did not make the 500–600 francs a year necessary for a minimal standard of living.

At the same time, this upheaval made possible social mobility unthinkable during the Ancien Régime. Individuals willing to adapt to the rules of this new society could sometimes ascend into its upper echelons from modest backgrounds, much to the distaste of the established wealthy class.

Literary Background

When Balzac began writing *Le Père Goriot* in 1834, he had written several dozen books, including a stream of pseudonymously published pot-boiler novels.

In 1829 he published Les Chouans, the first novel to which he signed his own name; this was followed by Louis Lambert (1832), Le Colonel Chabert (1832), and La Peau de chagrin (1831).

Around this time, Balzac began organizing his work into a sequence of novels that he eventually called *La Comédie humaine*, divided into sections representing various aspects of life in France during the early 19th century.

One of these aspects which fascinated Balzac was the life of crime. In the winter of 1828–29, a French grifter-turned-policeman named Eugène François Vidocq published a pair of sensationalized memoirs recounting his criminal exploits.

Balzac met Vidocq in April 1834 and used him as a model for a character named Vautrin he was planning for an upcoming novel.

Balzac was influenced by Scottish novelist Sir Walter Scott, author of such works as Ivanhoe, to incorporate realistic historical details into his fiction.

The father-daughter strife of Père Goriot has also been likened to the plot of Shakespeare's King Lear, and the story of Vautrin's temptation of Rastignac invites comparison to Goethe's Faust.

Of the many novels that make up Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*, one of the most critically acclaimed is Eugénie Grandet, which in turn influenced Washington Square by Balzac's protégé, Henry James.

WRITING AND PUBLICATION

In the summer of 1834, Balzac began to work on a tragic story about a father who is rejected by his daughters. His journal records several undated lines about the plot: "Subject of Old Goriot – A good man – middle-class lodging-house – 600 fr. income – having stripped himself bare for his daughters who both have 50,000 fr. income – dying like a dog."

Despite the opposition of the Church, this novel quickly became a printing phenomenon and obtained an immense repercussion in France and Europe, deeply influencing the genre of the novel. Translated into many languages, it is still published today and has often been adapted for film and television.

RECEPTION AND LEGACY

Le Père Goriot is widely considered Balzac's one of the most significant novels. Its influence on French literature has been considerable, as shown by novelist Félicien Marceau's remark: "We are all children of *Le Père Goriot*." Brooks refers to its "perfection of form, its economy of means and ends". Martin Kanes, meanwhile, in his book Le Pére Goriot: Anatomy of a Troubled World, calls it "the keystone of the *Comédie humaine*". It is the central text of Anthony Pugh's voluminous study of Balzac's Recurring Characters and entire chapters have

been written about the detail of the Maison Vauquer. Because it has become such an important novel for the study of French literature, *Le Père Goriot* has been translated many times into many languages. Thus, says Balzac biographer Graham Robb, "Goriot is one of the novels of *La Comédie humaine* that can safely be read in English for what it is."

Initial reviews of the book were mixed. Some reviewers accused Balzac of plagiarism or of overwhelming the reader with detail and painting a simplistic picture of Parisian high society. Others attacked the questionable morals of the characters, implying that Balzac was guilty of legitimizing their opinions. He was condemned for not including more individuals of honourable intent in the book. Balzac responded with disdain; in the second preface of 1835, he wrote with regard to Goriot: "Poor man! His daughters refused to recognize him because he had lost his fortune; now the critics have rejected him with the excuse that he was immoral."

Many critics of the time, though, were positive: a review in Le Journal des femmes proclaimed that Balzac's eye "penetrates everywhere, like a cunning serpent, to probe women's most intimate secrets". Another review, in La Revue du théâtre, praised his "admirable technique of details". The many reviews, positive and negative, were evidence of the book's popularity and success. One publisher's critique dismissed Balzac as a "boudoir writer", although it predicted for him "a brief career, but a glorious and enviable one".

Balzac himself was extremely proud of the work, declaring even before the final instalment was published: "*Le Père Goriot* is a raging success; my fiercest enemies have had to bend the knee. I have triumphed over everything, over friends as well as the envious." As was his custom, he revised the novel between editions; compared to other novels, however, *Le Père Goriot* remained largely unchanged from its initial version. According to the editor of the Norton Critical Edition, Peter Brooks, the book is now seen as "the most endurably popular of Balzac's myriad works" and a "classic of the [18th]-century European novel", yet one ironically now considered such, in light of the reviews of it and reputation of Balzac from his own time.

In the years following its release, the novel was often adapted for the stage. Two theatrical productions in 1835 – several months after the book's publication – sustained its popularity and increased the public's regard for Balzac. In the 20th century, a number of film versions were produced, including adaptations directed by Travers Vale (1915), Jacques de Baroncelli (1922), and Paddy Russell (1968). The name of Rastignac, meanwhile, has become an iconic sobriquet in the French language; a "Rastignac" is synonymous with a person willing to climb the social ladder at any cost.

UNIT - 2

UNIT 2 (A): DETAILED SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

The story takes place in Paris in the year 1819 and starts with the author wondering if the sense of this novel can be understood by non-Parisians and then answering to himself that most probably Goriot would become known only in Paris. Balzac describes a decrepit, dirty, ill-smelling boarding place which is owned by Mrs. Vauquer, a stingy old widow, who rules over the tenants. During the story, it is seen that seven people are living in the mansion and renting apartments there. The best apartments are on the first floor and the higher the floor the more the rooms resemble crampy, dirty boxes. The first floor is taken by the landlady - widow Vauquer and the second apartment on the first floor belongs to Mrs. Couture, a widow of a Republican official. Another, smaller apartment on the first floor is rented by a young girl named Victorine Taillefer who lives alone but admires and respects Mrs. Couture like her own mother. The second floor is divided into halves: one half belongs to an elderly man Mr. Poret, and a mysterious man named Vautrin lives in the other half. He looks like he is about forty. He tells people that he used to be a salesman once and wears a weird black wig. Four people live on the third floor with the worst rooms. One is rented by Ms. Michonneau and the other by the hero of this story, Mr. Goriot, who used to make vermicelli, but is retired now. The other two rooms are usually leased to students who live there for a while until they find something better. One of these rooms is currently inhabited by a student named Eugene de Rastignac. The fourth floor is not actually a floor, it is an attic where the things are stored, the laundry is dried and there are two tiny rooms for the personnel: a servant named Christopher and a cook named Sylvie.

Each of the aforementioned characters has some of their own defining qualities that make them unique. They all are of different ages, wealth, origins and goals in life. But still, they all are united with one common concern – money. The life path of each of them is very clear up to stereotypic. The only shadowy persons here are Goriot and Vautrin. Goriot just keeps quiet about his past and the events that brought him to his miserable condition, not caring at all about all the gossip and versions the other inhabitants of the mansion built around him. Vautrin has a double nature, being genuinely kind on the one side and cowardly and traitorous on the other

side. Such close cohabitation of different people leads to lots of love triangles, tangled relationships and countless gossip. Goriot is often the victim of these. At first, the widow Vauquer, his landlady, starts to show him signs of affection, but the old man does not care. The offended woman immediately goes from sweetness to threats, cutting him off cooked food, water and heating, especially after she saw him with some beautiful young women and understood that they were in an intimate relationship. After the improvised investigation it turns out that Goriot is not a womanizer, he just spends time with his daughters. The inhabitants of the mansion are surprised even more: the women look happy and wealthy, why do they allow their father to live in poverty?

In the meantime, Goriot's financial situation worsens. He has to leave his apartment on the second floor and move to the third, into one of the students' rooms. He starts eating less and even quits smoking to save money. Now he looks even older than he actually is, and his health starts deteriorating. The changes are so drastic and fast that look almost supernatural, making the rest of the mansion dwellers feel horrified and wonder why his daughters do not care for him. But the answer to this question is simple: it is Goriot who cares about his daughters. He does everything to earn and save some money to give it to them.

After the story of Goriot, the narrative focuses on his new neighbour, Eugene de Rastignac. He is a reckless student, who loves all the joys of flesh available in Paris. Now he is experienced enough to see that loving the right woman may increase his social status, give him wealth and even fame. At the moment, Rastignac is searching for a woman who would be able to grant him everything he desires. He has never experienced a wealthy life before, the family of Rastignac is poor and all the hard-earned money was spent to send him to the capital to study and live a better life than them. After arriving in Paris, Rastignac was dependent on his wealthy and noble aunt, Mrs. de Marcillac who befriended all the upper-crust members. Speaking to her, Rastignac realized that he has a chance to enter the high society. His aunt finally recommends him to Ms. de Beauseant, one of the most influential and wealthy women in the Parisian nobility. Ms. de Beauseant indeed helps young Rastignac to enter her circles of society and he becomes mesmerized by its wealth and chic. He starts to lust after Ms. Restaud, charming and beautiful, thinking that she should be the daughter of some rich aristocrat. But the truth is revealed that day when Rastignac sees Goriot, preparing his last silver plates to sell. Goriot bursts into tears and confesses that the alluring and beautiful Ms. Restaud is actually his daughter.

Once Rastignac visits Mrs. Beauseant and she takes him to the theatre, making everyone look at them together, gossip and discuss her companion. Rastignac is ecstatic: finally, he is the centre of attention. In the theatre, he meets another beautiful young woman: Delphine de Nuncigen, who happens to be the second daughter of Goriot and Ms. Restaud's sister. But in the same way, the sister's vanity made them to disown their father, Delphine disowns Ms. Restaud, considering her way below herself and not a sister to her. Rastignac immediately makes Delphine his ultimate goal. He starts to court her intensively (Ms. Restaud already rejected him, because Rastignac unintentionally mentioned her father and she was clearly ashamed of any connection to him). De Nuncigen is flattered by his attention and enjoys it, but does not give anything in return, just using her new admirer as a source of compliments. Rastignac makes more and more acquaintances in high society. This obliges him to look and behave appropriately and the young student cares more and more about his own appearance. Mrs. Beauseant gives him some advice about learning fencing, changing his wardrobe and speaking like a noble person and Rastignac is eager to learn all these. He is extremely motivated to become rich and famous while he is still young and can be interesting to rich and noble women. He writes to his family, telling them about his success, flattering them and saying how much he appreciates their help, but all this is just to ask them for more money to spend on fancy clothes, amusements and fencing lessons. His mother is amazed by her son's success and promises to sell everything and buy him whatever he needs from shirts to silken handkerchiefs just to let Rastignac find his place amongst the nobility. But Rastignac is not content with what he has got: his lust for money increases.

But as much as Delphine, Rastignac needs his own admirers. So he continues to tell his fancy stories to Goriot and the old man soon befriends him. From Goriot's point of view, the kind young man brings him news from his daughters. Soon, Delphine invites Rastignac to her mansion and confesses that despite her beauty, status and wealth, she is depressed and unhappy all along, living on the brink of despair. Rastignac listens attentively and then Delphine offers to take a huge sum of money and go gambling to amuse themselves. Not knowing the rules of the game, Rastignac bets on number twenty-one, because he is twenty-one-year-old. Suddenly he wins several times. He turns to Delphine and sees a happy smile on her face: the woman claims that Rastignac has just saved her. Then she tells him the rest of the story: she is unhappily married and had to spend her dowry to continue living in the fancy way she is used to. But now the dowry is finished and Delphine has no money at all. The woman confesses that her greedy husband gives her only a small amount of money daily for her primary needs and

she feels too guilty to ask her father for more because she understands that she and her sister are killing him. She shares the money with Rastignac and invites him to come with her to dinners and theatres always. Rastignac comes home and tells Goriot the story of the day and what he heard from Delphine. Seeing how much his daughter's unhappiness hurts the old man, Rastignac gives all the money he has from gambling to him.

Inspired by his success, Rastignac continues gambling but loses time after time. But still, he continues to waste money. Vautrin, from whom Rastignac asks to borrow some more, warns the young man that continuing to live in this way will do him no good. In spite of the warning, Rastignac takes the money and soon pays it back. He starts to look closer at Vautrin and becomes slightly scared of him. Vautrin looks like he genuinely cares for him but still, there is something very unsettling about him. The real story of Vautrin is revealed to Ms. Michonneau and Poirot who walk in the park together and suddenly meet a person who warns them about Vautrin's real personality. He appears to be a loan shark and a former convict. After being released he took money from his fellow prisoners to keep it and then help their families and themselves if they were lucky enough to escape the prison. The person offers Ms. Michonneau a deal: to make Vautrin fall asleep with a potion he gives to her and then write certain words on his back. She agrees to do that.

In the meanwhile, Vautrin offers Rastignac to pursue an unmarried but wealthy woman named Victorine, who has a big dowry and will provide him with a steady source of money. Her brother is blocking access to her family fortune, but Vautrin says that he can arrange to have the brother killed in a duel. Rastignac refuses the idea of having someone killed just to gain access to money, but Vautrin claims that the ends always justify the means. Rastignac does not listen because he likes Delphine. Ms. Michonneau gives the potion to Vautrin and writes on his skin the words the mysterious person wanted her to. Ms. Victorine receives even more money because of the serious wound of de Taillefer. Rastignac does not get this: he gets a letter from Delphine with another piece of her sad story. She writes that she is looking for an apartment she can move into and take her father with her. She tells that her husband invested the rest of her dowry and his own money in some ventures abroad and she is left without a penny. Before long, the tenants discover that Vautrin is wanted by the police because he is a mastermind criminal in hiding. He arranges to have Victorine's brother killed anyway but is finally captured by the police. Meanwhile, Vautrin gets arrested because of Ms. Michonneau's excessive gossiping and yells at her that he should give her money for her silence while being taken away by the police. Mrs. Vaquer is devastated: her income continues to decrease with

Vautrin's imprisonment being the last straw. Delphine comes to Goriot, complaining to him about her situation. Her sister has a similar situation and also runs to Goriot asking for help and crying. Her husband is very ill, and she has sold all the family jewellery to pay for his treatment. Goriot, who is ill himself feels frustrated: he expected some compassion from his daughters, but both of them were demanding more money from him to solve their own problems. Rastignac occasionally hears about Goriot's troubles and forges one of the bonds left of Vautrin, rewriting it to Goriot's name and saving the day. The next time Rastignac attends the ball with Mrs. Beauseant, he sees the sold diamonds and gets depressed because of it. He remembers Goriot, ill and suffering, giving everything so that his daughter can wear these shiny diamonds.

Goriot's condition gets worse. This final betrayal by his daughters took away his will to live. No one notices this but Rastignac who talks to him every day and tries to cheer him up. Goriot tries to visit both of his daughters, but they keep telling him that they are ill or have much work to do or make other excuses. Goriot can not believe that they are just hiding from him even when he is approaching his death. He says some bitter words about them by calling them ungrateful and cold and stops trying to contact them. But Rastignac tries. He comes to Delphine to say her that her father is dying, but she again says that she is too ill to come. Delphine notices that Rastignac's watch is missing and asks him about it. He replies that he sold it to pay for Goriot's treatment and leaves it to Mrs. Restaud. After his persuasive speech, she agrees to come and see Goriot, but when she finally appears the old man has already passed away. Seeing the dead body of her father, Mrs. Restaud finally realizes how cruel and ignorant she was to him. Her husband refuses to give any money for the funeral and neither Mrs. Restaud nor Delphine have the money of their own. Rastignac gathers all his money to give his friend Goriot a decent funeral, but he has enough only to pay for the cheapest coffin. At his funeral, there are only a few people: Rastignac, a servant, and two paid mourners and none of Goriot's daughters bother to come. Rastignac comes to each of the sisters but they refuse to talk to him. Observing the loveless and miserable life and death of Goriot, Rastignac cries for the old man. At the end of the story, we see that Goriot involuntarily turned Rastignac from a reckless pleasure-seeker to a cold and calculative adult, ready to do anything to succeed.

UNIT 2 (B): ANALYSIS OF THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

i.Rastignac: He is one of the principal figures of the novel (though not the titular character) who undergoes a huge psychological change through the course of the novel. He is also the one who ties up the disparate elements of the work. A close observation of the novel shows that in the endless back-and-forth motion between the boarding-house and the outside world, and between Goriot and Vautrin, one character is inextricably involved: Eugène de Rastignac. He is the one who links the boarding-house to the rest of the Parisian society, and who, because of his ambitions, becomes involved with Delphine, and participates in Goriot's tragedy. He is also the character who appears constantly throughout the novel, thereby giving it an element of unity.

Rastignac is a naïve, idealistic 22-year-old law student who lives in the Maison Vauquer, Madame Vauquer's boarding house. Rastignac's parents, aunt, two brothers (Henri and Gabriel), and two sisters (Laure and Agathe) live on a provincial wine estate, getting by on a small income. Rastignac has come to Paris in search of a profitable career in hopes of supporting his family. At first, he is shown as a young student who has just arrived from the provinces, full of dreams and prepared to work hard in order to become a successful lawyer. He has some influential relatives in Paris and he is quick to realize that with their help he can enter one of the most restricted and aristocratic circles in Paris. Fascinated by the luxury and the pleasure that the life offers, he desperately wants to become a part of it. But to join an elite circle, one has to follow the rules, and Eugene discovers that in order to become a member, he will have to leave behind some of his moral principles. He will have to cheat, lie, and dull his ethics as well as moral sensibilities. He also realizes that the important instrument of success in this world is money.

He first begins to compromise by thinking of combining hard work and pleasure. But Vautrin is right at his side to whisper that hard work will lead him to a life of bourgeois mediocrity and in the meantime he will desperately need money. Eugène's previous self is defeated, and although he argues with himself and feels remorse, he starts exploiting his mother and sisters. He forgets about his studies, and when his money runs out, he becomes desperate; desperate enough to even listen to Vautrin's criminal plots. Gradually, his morality withers and he makes

more and more compromises. After he commits a *faux pas* during an attempt to win the heart of Madame de Restaud, he turns to his distant cousin, Madame de Beauséant, to be a "fairy godmother" and teach him how to succeed in the Parisian society. On her advice, Rastignac begins pursuing Madame de Restaud's sister, Madame Delphine de Nucingen, instead. He soon becomes genuinely infatuated with her. He accepts his illicit liaison with Delphine, Goriot's money, and his mistress' presents.

Though Vautrin offers Rastignac a shortcut to social success (which involves killing off a fellow boarder, Victorine's brother, so that she will be rich, allowing her to marry Rastignac), Rastignac never fully reconciles himself to this option. He is tempted, however, after he becomes immersed in Delphine's dissipated lifestyle and begins running up huge debts. The more Rastignac experiences the Parisian luxury, such as the apartment Delphine fixes up for him, the harder it is for him to imagine returning to a quiet provincial life. Through his obsession with Delphine, Rastignac also becomes friends with her father, Goriot, and starts genuinely caring for the old man; he is one of the few people at Goriot's deathbed and funeral. In fact, Rastignac's respect for Goriot seems to be one of the only things that prevent Rastignac from following Vautrin's immoral path to success. In the end, Rastignac became the strongest character after pawning everything he had to give Goriot a better life in his last days and to afford a funeral for him. Though Rastignac is disgusted with Paris's corrupt, status-driven society, yet he appears to reconcile himself to a lifelong struggle with it, continuing his relationship with Delphine. In spite of all the flaws, Eugène Rastignac remains a sympathetic character and readers' favourite because of his candour, his childish naïveté, and his love and devotion for Old Goriot.

ii.Father Goriot: The titular character of the novel is the object of Balzac's deepest analysis. His irrational passion is powerfully shown and carefully explained which constitutes the major dramatic elements of the novel, and progresses towards a sublimely tragic climax. Once wealthy, the fortune of this old man appears to have melted away and he has fallen on hard times.

Jean-Joachim Goriot is an elderly, retired pasta-maker who lives in the Masion Vauquer, Madame Vauquer's boarding house. He is the father of Anastasie and Delphine. Goriot was very successful in his trade, especially during the French Revolution, when he made a fortune. He could determine the type and quality of flour just by sniffing a piece of bread. At

the beginning of the novel, most people in the Maison Vauquer make fun of him. Madame Vauquer once daydreamed about becoming Goriot's wife, believing him to be rich—but when her hopes are rebuffed and Goriot's fortunes seem to dwindle (he moves into successively smaller apartments and mysteriously sells most of his possessions), she provokes the other boarders into mocking him.

Goriot's place in the boarding-house is presented in a way that it reflects the social structure and classes in France to the reader at that time. When Goriot starts staying at the boarding-house for the first time, Madame Vauquer takes him to the most luxurious and expensive room in the hostel. Because Goriot was quite rich in his initial days but later on, due to his daughters' consummation of all of his money,) he begins to move into worse and cheaper rooms on the upper floors of the hostel. At that time, apartments on the upper floors were always cheaper than the apartments on the lower floors because of the mice that carried epidemic diseases such as the plague, did not live in places where there was crowd, they lived on the upper floors. That's why the upper floors were cheaper and poor people used to live there.

He is a target of snide comments by other lodgers when two fashionable young women begin visiting Goriot, everyone assumes that he is an incorrigible rascal who has squandered his fortune on mistresses. However, it is gradually revealed that the women are actually his beloved daughters. Goriot is terribly affectionate towards his daughters and stops at nothing to ensure their happiness. So obsessed with fatherly love, he has sacrificed everything he ever owned to indulge these women and help them maintain their status in the salons of the city. He has just one shirt to his name while they run up bills with dressmakers and drive around the city in gilded coaches. In fact, his adoration of his children is his most distinguishing characteristic. However, his sons-in-law disdain him and refuse to let his daughters see him. They, in turn, only see Goriot when they need money. Goriot accepts this humiliation for the sake of seeing the girls and believing that they are happy, equating his own happiness and comfort with theirs.

Balzac carefully shows us in the character of Père Goriot how a wealthy merchant's passion has grown and overwhelmed him. The old man lives only for his daughters, adding sacrifice to sacrifice, bleeding himself of his money and of the vitality of his life force, and, when finally there remains nothing to give, he withers and dies. He ultimately finds a friend in Rastignac, assisting the young man in getting to know Delphine and enjoying more opportunities to see her in exchange. He refuses to see the true nature of this one-sided relationship until he is on

his deathbed—and even then, after both daughters fail to visit him, he is unable to fully accept it.

Father Goriot is a symbolic example of limitless parental love. His daughters maintain a wealthy lifestyle all because of their father's sacrifice but they did not appreciate him or showed any gratitude when he was alive. This strange passion inextricably combines two elements: animality and sublimity. It is seen throughout the book that Goriot exhibits animalistic behaviour toward his daughter – a behaviour often compared to that of a dog by critics. Balzac said of him, in reply to criticisms: "Old Goriot is like a murderer's dog, who licks the hand of his master when it is soiled with blood; he does not argue, he does not judge, he loves." And, indeed, his passion has annihilated every other human feeling in him. He would murder, steal, and "sell Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost" to spare his daughters. At the same time, Balzac elevates him to a type – a creator, a godlike figure, capable of infinite passion and abnegation, which will culminate in the ultimate sacrifice of that "Christ of Paternity." Tragic, pathetic, humane – these are the principal elements in the story of Goriot which ultimately destroys his life. The readers feel pity for this man and are deeply moved by his agony and death, the culmination of his tragic life.

On his deathbed, one of the most pitiful scenes in the novel, Goriot cries out to see his daughters one more time, alternatively berating them for their ingratitude and forgiving them for going to a ball instead of visiting him. Eugène is so touched by the old man's plight he chases around the city in search of the daughters to persuade them to visit their dying father. In the event, rather than attend Goriot's funeral, his daughters simply send their empty coaches.

Goriot does at first appear to be a man to be pitied. But ultimately, Balzac makes it evident that Goriot is entirely responsible for this situation, having raised the girls in a way that ensured they would be vain, idle, and selfish women. "The upbringing he gave his daughters was of course preposterous, the readers are told at one point. Far from being the epitome of fatherhood, he has spectacularly failed in his duty to install in them qualities of moral integrity and selflessness. In one of his few moments of lucidity, Goriot is forced to acknowledge his culpability: "It was I who made them, they belong to me."

iii.Vautrin: Vautrin, also known as Jacques Collin, is a complex and compelling character In the novel. Although his adventures in the novel are incidental, his personality is omnipresent in two-thirds of the book. He is an intriguing blend of charisma, cunning, and manipulation,

Vautrin serves as a catalyst for many significant events in the story. His character provides an avenue for Balzac to explore themes such as ambition, morality, and the corrupting influence of society. The story of Vautrin is that of revenge. He brings into the novel elements of mystery and melodrama which remind the readers of Balzac's earlier Gothic productions. But it is much more than an adventure-type story; it provides the readers with a brilliant characterization of a man — Vautrin, an escaped convict, ostracized by society, seeking revenge. A powerful character physically and mentally, a keen and cynical judge of his fellow men and of the evils of the social order, Vautrin later tries to use Rastignac as his alter ego to be an instrument for revenge.

Vautrin is presented at first as a strongly built, middle-class man, sensual, jovial, likeable, who indulges in silly jokes and pranks. He is a 40-year-old resident at the Maison Vauquer, Madame Vauquer's boarding house. Vautrin wears a wig and dyes his whiskers. He is a jovial, likeable neighbour who easily wins others' trust and affection. Madame Vauquer even entrusts him with a spare key to the boarding house. He is the most mysterious persona and it turns out that he was only posing to be Vautrin. Unknown to most other characters until the end of the novel, he is really an expert criminal and escaped convict named Jacques Collin, or "Death-Dodger," known in criminal circles as *Trompe-La-Mort* or Cheater of Death. Vautrin was a convict and a loan shark who took money from other prisoners, kept it safe and then used it to help the fugitives and their families.

He serves as the occasional voice for the novelist as he cynically comments on how to get ahead in a society that is itself corrupt. According to Vautrin, one must be more cunning than those with whom one is dealing. At the same time, he has a certain toughness and coldness about him. Vautrin notices Rastignac's hunger for social success and tries to exploit this by tempting the young man to take a shortcut. He proposes to arrange for Victorine's brother to be murdered so that she will receive a huge inheritance, benefiting both Rastignac (whom she transparently loves) and Vautrin (whom Rastignac will grant a commission). Vautrin lives by an immoral code, believing that there is no fixed moral point in the universe; he sees people and actions simply as means to ends. His dream is to own a massive plantation in the American South. His plans are ultimately thwarted as he gets arrested. His real identity was discovered when Ms. Michonneau put a potion in his drink which made letters appear on his skin revealing that he was a prisoner. Vautrin exits the story with a sneering denunciation of the other boarders' hypocrisy.

But the character is built on the quality of strength capable of breaking all obstacles. With this attribute, Vautrin becomes the symbol of a fighter, rebelling against a society which has created a person like him and degraded him. But Balzac endows Vautrin with mental power as well; thus creating a character of incomparable magnitude, capable of dominating everyone. Of this power, Balzac gives us an inkling in the first section: Vautrin's "eyes, like those of a pitiless judge, seemed to go to the very bottom of all questions, to read all natures, all feelings and thoughts." As the novel progresses, this power increases, almost to become supernatural and diabolical: "The escaped convict cast a glance at Eugène, a cold and fascinating glance. Men gifted with this magnetic power can quell furious lunatics in a madhouse by such a glance, it is said."

With his physical and mental strengths, Vautrin assumes the role of the diabolical tempter. A keen psychologist, he soon discovered the latent ambitions in Rastignac, whom he tries to convert to his side by his powerful comments on society, to make him an instrument of revenge. But to Vautrin, Rastignac is more than a mere instrument; he becomes a sort of alter ego. He becomes Rastignac's mentor, offering him advice and introducing him to the realities of the Parisian society. Vautrin's lessons revolve around the notion that societal success requires transcending moral boundaries, including manipulation, betrayal, and even murder. Through this relationship, Balzac explores the corrupting influence of ambition and the moral compromises individuals make in their pursuit of wealth and social standing.Vautrin feels a genuine interest in, and love for, the young man, in whom he can see the attributes he lacks: an aristocratic charm and elegance, allied with a spontaneous naïveté. Thus Vautrin attempts to mould Rastignac in his own image, to perform a sort of spiritual creation. In Vautrin's character, we find much of Balzac himself and of his preoccupations. The physical resemblance between Vautrin and Balzac has already been noted by scholars. Critics have opined that Vautrin expounds many Balzacian ideas and he unconsciously seems to be part of Balzac's dreams of the triumph of pure creation. This is the reason why Vautrin leaves us with mixed feelings. Although he is presented as a villain, as a cynical and vicious person, as a diabolical tempter, we cannot help but feel toward him the unexplainable feeling of admiration and wonder.

Vautrin is introduced as a mysterious and enigmatic figure, a mastermind criminal and a former convict. His dominant personality traits include a forceful presence, intelligence, and persuasive powers, which enable him to exert considerable influence over others. Vautrin's

relentless pursuit of power and wealth aligns him with the capitalist values of Balzac's time, making him an embodiment of the ruthless individualism and social climbing prevalent in early 19th-century France. While Vautrin's actions are morally reprehensible, he possesses a certain charm and charisma that make him a captivating character. His sharp wit, intelligence, and ability to read people make him both fascinating and dangerous. Vautrin's ability to navigate the complex web of relationships in the novel reveals his astute understanding of human nature and the power dynamics that drive society.

However, it is worth noting that Vautrin's character is not without its flaws. He embodies the darker side of ambition and represents a cynical perspective on human nature. His manipulative tactics and disregard for ethical considerations highlight the moral bankruptcy that can result from an unchecked pursuit of power and wealth. Vautrin's character serves as a cautionary tale, illustrating the moral compromises individuals may make when consumed by ambition. In conclusion, Vautrin is a complex and multifaceted character in *Le Père Goriot*. Balzac uses him to explore themes of ambition, morality, and the corrupting influence of society. Vautrin's charisma, intelligence, and manipulation skills make him a captivating figure, while his morally reprehensible actions serve as a cautionary tale. Through Vautrin, Balzac presents a critical examination of the societal values of his time and the choices individuals make in their pursuit of success.

UNIT 2 (C): THE CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE OF PARIS

In the nineteenth century, Paris was a preeminent focal point of the world. It was mythologized as the city of love, fashion and literature, seemingly radiant with the promise of personal fulfilment and happiness. At the same time, Paris was going through turbulent socio-political, economic and cultural changes. As a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, the city went through extensive transformation. Innumerable people started migrating from rural areas to the city in search of increasing options for occupation and the hope of better life. The population of Paris doubled due to the arrival of these aspiring people from the countryside. Realism, as it developed in the nineteenth century novel, reveals a new conception of the cosmopolitan in relation to the individual and to the local or provincial context. Industrialization, urbanization and the massive development in society imply a movement from provincial contexts to larger cities, especially Paris. New technology and modes of transport, especially the railways,

connected Paris to everywhere. Victor Hugo saw it as the "city of the future" and, retrospectively, Walter Benjamin dubbed it as "the capital of the nineteenth century". It has since then been the object of countless representations and descriptions in various types of texts, as in art. Notwithstanding, Paris has also remained peculiarly elusive, both for characters in novels and for authors trying to give shape to the city as a delimited and defined space. Parisian world, as it is created and imagined by the protagonists, from their particular viewpoints are linked to their desires, emotions and values.

From the nineteenth century, the preoccupation with cities is at the very centre of the occidental novelistic style; in Balzac, Dos Passos, Dickens, Zola, Proust and Joyce almost everything happens in the city. Not many authors have been able to infuse life into the landscape that they chose as a setting in the skilled way that Balzac did. It is said that in *Le Père Goriot*, Paris becomes a character in the same way the city does in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and as London becomes in Charles Dickens' works or St. Petersburg in Dostoevsky. This is evident in Balzac's portrayal of Parisian society as mercilessly stratified, corrupt, amoral, and money-obsessed. The novel's central theme is the life in Paris and it is shown in a series of events. The main problem is shown through a father's obsessive love for his daughters that has no limits. Other analyzed problems are the fight for survival in a big city, longing for success and reputation; a city where frauds, lies and betrayals are the basic human foundation that allows one to survive. All of these motives can be found in the lives of Goriot and his daughters, Eugene Rastignac, Vautrin, and other tenants of the mansion.

Balzac's novel is regarded as a typical realistic representation of cosmopolitan Paris and urban modernity. The novel's representations of social stratification are specific to Paris; perhaps the most densely populated city in Europe at the time. Travelling only a few blocks – as Rastignac does continually – takes the reader into vastly different worlds, distinguished by their architecture and reflecting the social class of their inhabitants. Paris in the post-Napoleonic era was split into distinct neighbourhoods. Three of these are featured prominently in *Le Père Goriot*: the aristocratic area of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, the newly upscale quarter of the rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin, and the run-down area on the eastern slope of the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève. Hailing from countryside, Rastignac initially does not know the specifics of these areas. Vautrin, on the other hand, knows these corners and their mechanism too well. He is the one who takes Rastignac on a ride through the different sections of the city. He exclaims, "You are still too young to know much about Paris". Gradually, these *quartiers* of the city

serve as microcosms which Rastignac seeks to adapt to and then master. Vautrin, meanwhile, operates in stealth, moving among them undetected.

Paris offers Rastiganc a chance to abandon his far-away family and remake himself in the city's ruthless image. His urban exodus is like that of many people who moved into the French capital, doubling its population between the years 1800 and 1830. We can also see a peculiar relationship between Rastignac and the city – on one hand, he has a desire to cooperate with the mechanics of the city, a willingness to adapt to its conditions and laws; on the other, he wants to combat and dominate it. At this point, he has already gained important insights into the mechanisms of Parisian society, such as the lack of authenticity in people living there and their vanity. He has witnessed that Goriot has been ruthlessly exploited by his own daughters until his death. Rastignac has learned that empathy and true love do not have a place in Paris and it is impossible to change the Parisian people. This bleak truth is not only valid in higher circles but also in Madame Vauquer's lodging house, where total indifference dominates the moments after Goriot's death, at dinner. The reader of *Le Père Goriot* already knows of these evil characteristics of Parisian life from Vautrin's speech to Rastignac – honesty is pointless and success can only be obtained through corruption or genius. Another of Rastignac's models, the Vicomtesse de Beauseant, had a similar message: the Parisian world is villainous and mean; corruption and vanity rule here and it is crucial to hide one's true emotions. Vautrin explains that in order to be a real Parisian, one has to strive for glory and money.

Balzac writes, "Paris is in truth an ocean that no line can plumb." The description that follows is of ugly districts, its streets, the lodging house and in particular its interior and lodgers. Interestingly, it is one of the most detailed descriptions in the novel. This is the most abhorrent part of the capital and also the least known, says the narrator himself. In fact, from the beginning, local aspects of the capital are underlined in the novel, rather than the cosmopolitan ones. At different points in the novel, the reader is reminded of the vagueness and vastness of the capital, of its indescribable traits, of the fact that this city defies any observer who tries to grasp it. It is referred to as "an ocean that no line can plumb", "the ocean of Paris", "an ocean of mud", "the labyrinth of Paris" and "a forest in the New World". The narrator evaluates the Parisian provinces negatively: immobility, narrowness, greed, gossip and ridicule rule her. Paris is represented and constructed in relation to a subject's desire and potential, to what the protagonist could be and become in that place. From distant positions, on heights, or from the point of view of maps and texts, the protagonists try to grasp the world of the city, but as soon as they move closer and start living in it according to

cosmopolitan conventions, the illusion of control is revealed. To get into it and submit to its laws is difficult if you come from outside. As the narrator affirms at the beginning of *Le Père Goriot*, it is hardly possible to understand the story of Paris for people 'extra muros'. Momentarily, however, going back to the countryside can mean a reinforcement of identity and a feeling of having become someone in the eyes of non-Parisians. In this way, the dynamics between the local, provincial sphere and the cosmopolitan one play an important role. The tension between these two worlds is fundamental in Balzac. It is in this power field that the modern subject is born and provincialism and cosmopolitanism are produced.

At the end of the novel, we see that Rastignac is no longer the man who came to Paris with big dreams. He is ensnared by the luxurious aristocratic high society and the aspiration to enter there has metamorphosed him completely. Rastignac is strongly affected by the tragic life and death of his friend Goriot. Witnessing his tragic death, Rastignac realizes that money is the only thing that matters in this society. Everything about Paris is materialistic where love, care or compassion means nothing. Goriot utters in his death-bed, "Ah! If I'd been rich, if I'd kept my fortune, If I hadn't given them everything, they'd have been here,...Money brings you everything, even daughter.". He sheds a tear that presumably blurs his view of the city, which is almost seen as a creature, "a snake, lying tortuously close to the banks of the Seine", reminding us of evil forces at play. He has learnt enough about the capital, which his elevated position on top of the Père Lachaise hill suggests. He is no longer down there, in the sordid quarters of Paris, but contemplates the city from above.

> It was growing dusk, the damp twilight fretted his nerves; he gazed down into the grave and the tears he shed were drawn from him by the sacred emotion, a single-hearted sorrow. When such tears fall on earth, their radiance reaches heaven. And with that tear that fell on Father Goriot's grave, Eugene Rastignac's youth ended. He folded his arms and gazed at the clouded sky; and Christophe, after a glance at him, turned and went – Rastignac was left alone. He went a few paces further, to the highest point of the cemetery, and looked out over Paris and the windings of the Seine; the lamps were beginning to shine on either side of the river. His eyes turned almost eagerly to the space between the column of the Place Vendome and the cupola of the Invalides; there lay the shining world that he had wished to reach. He glanced over that humming hive, seeming to draw a foretaste of its honey, and said magniloquently: Henceforth there is war between us. And by way of throwing down the glove to Society, Rastignac went to dine with Mme de Nucingen. (Balzac)

Rastignac, once and for all, understands what Paris is. At the end of the novel, we see him threatening the city as an adversary, "Now it's just the two of us! I'm ready".

Balzac's ties with Paris are made complex by the fact that his interests are those both of the Parisian and of the novelist. Paris originally is the milieu in which Balzac lives and works, but it is also his hunting ground where he goes in pursuit of characters for his novels; finally, it is the predominant setting for his work. The city of Paris and the several neighbourhoods are chosen by him to serve as the framework for particular scenes which have been depicted truthfully. He represents each of them with its peculiar physiognomy as a particular space set aside for the flowering of a particular social species: the Faubourg Saint-Germain is reserved for the nobility, the Chausee d'Antin for financiers, the ground between the Palais Royal and the Louvre is where prostitutes stroll, and the Rue Saint-Denis is set aside for small businessmen.

The young Balzac once explored Paris with passion. His first exploration of the Parisian world, like his first experience as a young man in this extravagant capital, straightway deposited an ambivalent attitude within him. Paris at one point is paradise, at another it is hell. But his fascination with the city is always stronger than any weariness or disgust. "The monster," as he calls it, is an enigma from whom Balzac cannot turn away his fascinated gaze of curiosity. Paris, he writes in *Ferragus*, "is the most delightful of monsters." If he calls it a monster, there is a kind of tenderness in the accusation by which he underscores, not without some personal approval of the city's enormity and its fabled complexity. The proof of this is that he has no hesitation about associating the modifier "delightful" with the label "monster." The suggestion here is that the monster is a woman, and this impression is confirmed later when Balzac writes of the city as "a pretty woman," or "as being elegant like a stylish woman." Certain commentators have used this as the point of departure for the psychoanalysis of Balzac himself. Pierre Citron, for example, tells us that his attitude where Paris is concerned is very much that of Don Juan toward a woman to be conquered. There is little doubt that such an interpretation has value; many Balzacien heroes are young men from the provinces who come to Paris with ideas of conquest in mind, and, in the *Comedie Humaine*, the conquest of Paris is often achieved in a woman's bedroom, sometimes in the bedrooms of several.

If we review the comparisons and metaphors used by Balzac when he writes of Paris, we are struck by the fact that a number of them have to do with movement and life. In effect, Paris for Balzac is not only a setting. It is more than this – a "moral" milieu, with special depths and heights; most especially, it is living matter. Paris is indeed the setting for most of Balzac's

novels. Aside from the *Scenes de la vie parisienne* series, a number of novels listed under other series titles unfold in Paris, Balzac knew Paris marvellously well from the time when, as a young man, he had strolled through every nook and cranny of the city. It also offers such a variety of neighbourhoods and inhabitants that the novelist finds many settings in it, all rich with historical associations, and all potentially open to every kind of adventure. In the end, Paris is not simply the sort of picturesque backdrop. Like Baudelaire, Balzac is wonderfully sensitive to the Parisian atmosphere. Each neighbourhood is depicted as a living being, characterized by its peculiar traits as well as by its history and especially its mores. To enter another neighbourhood, to move, is not simply to change social position, but also habits and morality; more than an alteration, it is a metamorphosis. There is, of course, a whole process of apprenticeship to go through, a whole set of mental and vocabulary exercises that every poor and ambitious young man like Rastignac must learn in order to play his role suitably in the different social circles he is called upon to frequent, some out of choice, others out of necessity. By a similar token, Vautrin's power stems from the ease with which he moves everywhere, whether in the Vauquer pension, at the Opera ball, in the Conciergerie, or at the bedside of Madame de Serisy. His cunning abilities and charming nature allow him to move comfortably in the most diverse places and social circles. Generally, the Parisians of the *Comedie humaine* evolve within the limits of their particular sphere. There are lines of communication between the different spheres nonetheless, for Paris is not composed of fixed and stratified milieux; powerful currents sweep across and through it. Paris breathes, Paris lives.

UNIT – 3

UNIT 3 (A): STUDY OF REALISM AND THE REALISTIC TRADITION OF NOVEL WRITING

Realism is a popular literary genre which attempts to present the subject-matter of the narrative truthfully. The realist authors deliberately choose to portray the mundane details and banal activities of everyday life as it is. The tradition began with the realist art movement which originated during the mid-nineteenth century. The French writer Stendhal and Russian author

Alexander Pushkin are considered to be the beginners of this literary vogue. Realistic writers avoid using fantastical or supernatural plots and characters. They do not include epic stories of heroism and exotic setting as the backdrop; rather focus on the dailiness of common people and their everyday life situations. The representation of reality is the primary focus of the artists as they carefully attempt to represent subject matter truthfully, without artificiality and avoiding artistic conventions, as well as implausible, exotic and supernatural elements. Realist works of art may emphasize the ugly or sordid, such as works of social realism, regionalism, or kitchen sink realism.

The History of Realism

In the late 18th century, Romanticism was a revolt against the aristocratic social and political norms of the previous Age of Reason and a reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature found in the dominant philosophy of the 18th century, as well as a reaction to the Industrial Revolution. It was embodied most strongly in the visual arts, music, and literature, but had a major impact on historiography, education, and the natural sciences. After the second half of the nineteenth century, the movement of Realism emerged as a direct response to the dominant form of Romanticism, an extremely popular movement in European literature and art between the late 18th century and the mid-19th century. 19th century realism was, in turn, a reaction to Romanticism, and for this reason, it is also commonly derogatorily referred to as traditional or "bourgeois realism". Romantic works tell stories of larger-than-life characters who embark on ambitious adventures, pursue passionate love affairs, discover new worlds, conquer fearsome enemies, or otherwise make themselves paragons of virtue and nobility. Conversely, literary realism tells stories as truthfully and authentically as possible, without glamorizing or sentimentalizing key details. The realist painters rejected Romanticism, which had come to dominate French literature and art, with roots in the late 18th century. France was at the epicentre of realism. The realistic art movement in painting, inspired by the painter Courbet's aesthetic stance, began in France in the 1850s, after the 1848 Revolution. Realism as a movement in literature was a post-1848 phenomenon, according to its first theorist Jules-Français Champfleury. The French journalist Champfleury, who had popularized Courbet's painting style, transferred the latter's theories to literature in *Le Réalisme* (1857). In this influential critical manifesto, Champfleury asserted that the hero of a novel should be an ordinary man rather than an exceptional figure.

The writer Stendhal created pioneering works that realistically portrayed French life. He and others drew on the then-emerging fields of biology and psychology—as well as history, sociology, and the advancing Industrial Age—to craft stories and characters with whom the average reader could identify. Honoré de Balzac was the chief precursor of realism who became a French realism icon with the publication of *La Comédie humaine and its detailed encyclopaedic portrait of the whole range of the French society*. In the Introduction to *The Human Comedy* (1842), Balzac claims that poetic creation and scientific creation are closely related activities, manifesting the tendency of realists towards taking over scientific methods. The artists of realism used the achievements of contemporary science, the strictness and precision of the scientific method, in order to understand reality. Novelist Gustave Flaubert was also highly influential with novels like *Madame Bovary* (1957), establishing a quintessential narrative voice for literary realism. This unrelentingly objective portrait of the bourgeois mentality, with its examination of every psychological nuance of an unhappy and adulterous middle-class wife, was both the principal masterpiece of realism and the work that established the movement on the European scene. Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1870), with its presentation of a vast panorama of France under Louis-Philippe, was another principal realist work. The brothers Jules and Edmond Goncourt were also important realist writers. In their masterpiece, *Germinie Lacerteux* (1864), and in other works they covered a variety of social and occupational milieus and frankly described social relations among both the upper and the lower classes.

Realism did not remain a uniquely French phenomenon. Realist tenets entered the mainstream of European literature during the 1860s and '70s. Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, and George Eliot in England, Ivan Turgenev, Leo Tolstoy, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky in Russia, William Dean Howells, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane in the United States, and Gottfried Keller and the early Thomas Mann in Germany all incorporated realist elements in their novels. A significant offshoot of literary realism was Naturalism, a late 19th- and early 20th-century movement that aimed at an even more faithful and unselective representation of reality. The French novelist Émile Zola was the leading exponent of Naturalism.

In the beginning, it was thought that supernatural and mysterious forces regulated the lives of all human beings. People eventually learned that every thought, every behaviour, and social relations between them can only be explained by material reasons. The emergence of reality, as a creative method in art and literature, started with the understanding and comprehension of the orientation of this reality. The first thing a realist artist did was get to know everyday life.

Artists have always tended to depict concrete, observed, seen, and experienced things. They started to know and research the outside world. On the other hand, the efforts of philosophers such as Descartes and Bacon, who made researching the outside world an important part of their lives, strengthened further this orientation of the artists. These philosophers had a great role in the perception of the external world as a material essence. The search for real and reality encountered many obstacles in the path of its development. The most important of these obstacles is to observe the social position of the human being. What kind of social position are people in? Where do people stand in class relations and class conflicts? Seeking answers to these questions forced artists to analyze reality. The artist began to perceive and analyze human beings with their environment. This was an important step on the road to realism.

The French Revolution brought a monumental shift in the horizon of human thoughts and consciousness. Authors like Balzac, Stendhal, Chekov, Gorki, Tolstoy, Fielding, et al started to explain their surrounding world in pages by integrating people with their environment. They began to choose social situations and backdrops of actions from daily life. Thus, the decisive characteristics of realism developed in the novels of these authors are – documenting daily life, situating the characters in the social environments known to the readers, analyzing their social relations, and more importantly, describing everything correctly. At the same time, these realist writers commented on the environmental and social conditions that make up human nature. At this point, the value of money brought by the capitalist system has surpassed all other human values. Balzac presented all these realities of the period in this book where having money means everything.

Features of Realism

- First and foremost, the realist writers draw motivation from their surrounding worldview. The main concern of a realistic writer is credibility and this element of credibility in the realism movement is an indispensable seed of every narration. A realistic story cannot be brought to life without its credibility.
- Realism aims to reproduce “objective reality”, and focused on showing everyday, quotidian activities and life, primarily among the middle or lower-class society, without romantic idealization or dramatization.
- Realism’s emphasis on detachment, objectivity, and accurate observation, its lucid but restrained criticism of social environment and mores, and the humane understanding

that underlay its moral judgments became an integral part of the fabric of the modern novel during the height of that form's development.

- The author reflects on existing situations such as the economy, everyday life, and social conditions because the characters are shaped by these situations. Realism is the potent medium through which the overlapping issues of social and individual are represented.
- Works of realism aim to portray realistic characters in the narrative. These characters are not entirely good or bad as protagonists or antagonists. In realism, characters are neither entirely righteous nor totally corrupt—they are complex, with both positive and negative traits.
- The concept of labour and living plays prominent roles in the major texts of literary realism. The protagonist's job is a significant aspect of their identity, whether for good or ill. Matters of heart and acts of monumental courage take a backseat to the more pressing demands of earning a living.
- Realist writers focus on the effects of specific environments on their stories. They use genuine life-like settings and backdrops so that the readers might identify with those.
- The character characters in the realistic novel are members of the general mass and real life, not the heroes and omnipotent gods.
- Realistic fiction stories tend to take place in the present or recent past.
- Societies usually play significant roles in the lives of the characters. Choices, events and actions of the narratives are not dictated by a grand romantic idea of personal valour or virtue, but by the conditioning imposed by society.
- Dialogues are not grand or lofty, rather straightforward and colloquial in tone. It reflects the vernacular of the characters of the specific time and place in which the story is set.

Conclusion

But realism is not without its detractors. Critics say it is not possible to portray reality in literature because some amount of imagination and creative license is always necessary. Others argue that all literature—to one degree or another—has realist elements and can thus fall under the definition of *realism*. Finally, there are those who think reality is subjective, which would make a definitive label of realism virtually impossible. It is undeniable that there can be no authors who have an extremely objective and impartial perspective. As the stories

pass through the sieve in the minds of the authors, they are definitely influenced by the author's worldview and perspective. For a writer, the reality is what truth means to her/him in her/his personal view. Though literary realism as a movement died down around the mid-20th century, its impact lives on. Most modern writers seek to create characters and stories, with which readers can, to some extent, relate.

UNIT 3 (B): *LE PERE GORIOT* AS A REALIST NOVEL

Balzac is widely credited with being one of the founders of Realism and his *Le Père Goriot* has been justly acclaimed as a great realistic novel which changed literature and the depiction of reality forever. In 1832 he came up with the idea of *The Human Come*dy: a series of books on contemporary French life that Balzac would spend the rest of his life working on and would span 95 finished works and 48 unfinished. It was only after his death in 1850 that the term 'realism' was applied to Balzac's work. In the 1850s there was a vogue for realism and Balzac was hailed as the great innovator, the revolutionary, who had started it. In the Avant-Propos of *La Comédie humaine*, Balzac claims that he wants to represent in this series of novels, society and the variety of human types. This statement is related to the concept of realism. By affirming that he wants to represent society and the human types, his novels constitute their foundations on reality. Balzac had a very rich life experience and he chased money with enthusiasm, but the pursuit of money trapped him in a huge amount of debt. It was during those years, he saw the darkness of the capitalist society. The author, through the ups and downs of his characters, strongly criticized and exposed the essence of the capitalist notion of money supremacy.

Le Père Goriot is set in 1819, after Napoleon's defeat and when the Industrial Revolution started. It was a period of great revolution and changes in the hierarchy of the social classes and Balzac aims to represent the various tensions of that period, especially happening in Paris. Moreover, in the Avant-Propos, Balzac affirms that the novelist should be the secretary of the history, he tells us the story from a scientific point of view because he added that the novelist has to study humanity as the biologist study the animals. Hence, this essay discusses the fact that the context of the novel and the description of the social tension can be defined as the realistic part of the novel which is intertwined in the plot and in the fictional characters that have a connection to the real life. By combining art with reality and highlighting the importance of artistic truth, the overall framework of the text or the arrangement of the details has evoked a

unique charm for the readers. In his treatment of reality, Balzac is very serious and careful. He particularly pays attention to the specifics of the economic situation of the time. He describes the financial details embedded in the novel with a very precise and realistic picture. Only through such small economic details, he vividly exposes the bourgeois money-oriented social status quo, showing the family's wealth to the standard as a measure of social reality.

The novel tells the story of Old Goriot and the other inhabitants of Madame Vauquer's Parisian boarding house in 1819. Goriot has bankrupted himself to shore up the finances of his two extravagantly married daughters, selling off everything he owns until he is penniless. The stress of not being able to provide any more for them makes him ill and he eventually dies. Also boarding in the same house are the protagonist Eugene de Rastignac and the villain Vautrin, who develop a plot to advance Rastignac in society by swindling women for their money. Rastignac is an extremely important character because his back-story resembles that of Balzac: travelling up from the rural south of France to Paris in 1819 and then trying to advance himself out of the poverty and squalor that Paris consisted of. Balzac was also a law student, working for several years in a law firm of Victor Passez, and many of his books are concerned with criminal cases and legal affairs. Balzac quit this, detesting the regularity of the legal lifestyle, preferring the nocturnal musings of literature. All through his life, however, he would dabble in other business ventures, none of which were very successful.

There are three elements which make *Le Pere Goriot* especially important to the understanding of what realism is and how has Balzac changed the face of literature:

The first is the break with romanticism which is implicit in the design and intention of *The Human Comedy*. When *Goriot* was published in 1835, French literary society was at the tail-end of a period of romanticism. Romanticism is not exactly intended to be an everyday story about everyday folk. Romanticism is designed to engage the emotions of the reader, to lose them in a fantasy world which has only marginal contact with contemporary society: it is the real world but with all the boring bits taken out, and replaced with outlandish adventures involving lost kings, dungeons and all sorts of other pap. Balzac was interested in the depiction of the world around him, the sights and sounds therein. A more cynical person might suggest that Balzac had discovered a niche in the market: the innovation coming from financial necessity. Either way, *Goriot* contains, on the second page of the first chapter, this statement: "[T]his drama is neither a fiction nor a romance! All is true,–so true, that each one of you may recognise its elements in his own family, perhaps in his own heart" (1895, Caxton Ed.). This

is the first, embryonic statement of intent for *The Human Comedy* project, the desire to depict life in a way that the common reader will be able to recognize as being similar to their own life. In 1842, he wrote the Preface which explained in more depth what he aimed to achieve and the methods by which he would proceed. But it was here, in *Goriot*, that the first printed indication of that intent was realized.

The second element is that money – the lack of it, the desire for it, the necessity of it – is absolutely integral to the world depicted. It would be ridiculous to suggest that money had never been mentioned in previous literary works, but it was regarded as a common part of everyday life which was impolite to discuss in detail. Besides, romantic novels were never excessively concerned with only money. This obsessive concern with money becomes the driving force and moral dilemma for the characters. The selfishness and greed of the daughters of Goriot are held up for examination along with, by implication, the rest of the Parisian Bourgeoisie. It is interesting to note that one of the earliest notes by Balzac attributable to his planning of *Goriot* concerns the disparity in wealth between the daughters and the father – listing their income as 50,000fr. per annum and his at 500fr.. The plot of Rastignac is also bound up with the acquisition of wealth, showing quite simply how advancement in society is only possible with money.

The third important element is the use of recurring characters. *The Human Comedy* is set in a contemporary French society and so, in the nature of depicting a realistic world, it is likely that several of the characters will cross paths with others among the various works. Rastignac is the first character to be repeated, having been an old man in the 1831 novel *The Magic Skin* (*La Peau de chagrin*). He goes on to be in 17 other works by Balzac. The criminal mastermind Vautrin also goes on to be the dark star of the *Splendours and Miseries* series of works. Other boarders from the Maison Vauquer go on to have minor roles in other major works. This interconnectivity of the social world creates a wider fictional universe of *The Human Comedy* in which each individual novel can sit. Readers can find themselves immersed in a world which, like their own, contains many recognisable faces, flitting in and out of view.

As one of the realist giants, Balzac thoroughly understood the socio-cultural ethos of his time and his work is not a novel in a narrow sense, but a realistic portrayal of the social history. All his life Balzac was concerned with getting data for his art of realistic character portrayal. He went as far as visiting graveyards and jotting down the names on the tombstones. Balzac's realism is also apparent in the minute descriptions he gives us; in the way, he makes his

characters express themselves according to their background. With a diligent study of his time, he writes in his book invaluable information about the members, their interests, and their behaviour. He depicts many levels of social classes – high aristocracy, the middle class, the bourgeois, and the somewhat pitiful members of the lower classes: Bianchon, old Poiret, Mlle. Michonneau, Gobseck the usurer, Sylvie, and Christophe. But Balzac sometimes goes beyond even realism. He assesses each human being, classifying him as an entomologist or a zoologist would, comparing each one of his characters in the book with an animal of some kind. He tries to show us that man is predetermined not so much by his psychological makeup but rather by his environment, his social milieu. This scientific or pseudo-scientific approach to human reality constitutes the naturalistic elements in the novel.

This novel is the work of a skilled wordsmith turning a shrewd eye on a city of increasing tension between the newly restored aristocratic class and the bourgeoisie class resulting from the Industrial Revolution. The text, which brilliantly reflects its period on papers, displays a meticulous analysis of contemporary society. Every situation that affected the people of the society is described as realistically as it is. What Balzac sees is a corrupt, ruthless society that feeds on ambition, money and status. Into its net steps a young, poor but ambitious law student from the provinces. Eugène de Rastignac is determined to climb the ladder to wealth and status. He is undeterred by his lack of money (he simply exploits his poor mother and sisters by persuading them to sell their jewels) but he has a valuable connection into the Parisian elite circle through his cousin Madame de Beauséant. She tutors him in the ways of high society, advising him bluntly that to succeed he must put aside his previous character. The further Eugène progresses towards remaking himself, the more he sees that beneath the glitter lies a world of deceit, greed and manipulation and an obsessive love of money. At the same time, the living conditions of that period are elaborately analyzed and critiqued. It definitely takes a lot of strength to survive in the greedy, corrupt, materialistic society that Balzac describes. Money is the determining key to success and survival. Balzac pours the disdainful value of money on the pages with the characters he creates and the actions he depicts. He does not see people as just social elements rather he is concerned with their corrupt souls. He sees how money takes precedence over love, loyalty, and morality through the character of the novel. On the other hand, he criticizes the collapse of the bourgeoisie, who became businessmen by entering into trade and earning money, and the aristocracy, which is described as the upper class. The author analyzes all the features that corrupt society with materiality. In short, it criticizes

contemporary society due to its excessive dependence on money. The essence of his realistic novel writing is embedded in his rigorous social analysis.

In the decrepit boarding house, he experiences another kind of obsession in the shape of a fellow inhabitant, the retired pasta maker, Père Goriot. Once wealthy, the fortune of this old man appears to have melted away and he has fallen on hard times. He is a target of snide comments by other lodgers who soon learn that the two young and astonishingly beautiful girls seen entering his room are his daughters. So obsessed with fatherly love, Goriot has sacrificed everything he ever owned to indulge these women and help them maintain their status in the salons of the city. He has just one shirt to his name while they run up bills with dressmakers and drive around the city in gilded coaches. On his deathbed, one of the most pitiful scenes in the novel, Goriot cries out to see his daughters one more time, alternatively berating them for their ingratitude and forgiving them for going to a ball instead of visiting him. Eugène is so touched by the old man's plight he chases around the city in search of the daughters to persuade them to visit their dying father. In the event, rather than attend Goriot's funeral, his daughters simply send their empty coaches. Goriot's experience and the reaction of his daughters open Eugène's eyes to the true nature of the society he has aspired to join. But it does not deter him from his path. It means only that he goes forth, no longer an innocent youth, but a man more cynical and calculating, ready to take on the city. Standing on a hill surveying the city laid out beneath him, he shouts a warning "Beware Paris, here I come — " Paris, a metropolis with double life melody of both "Paradise" and "Hell on Earth", is described vividly in detail with a series of typical characters' depiction, which makes readers comprehend urban "ripples of poetic" fully, namely, money and enjoy.

In addition to the material environment, Balzac also profoundly depicts the social environment, which is the specific historical time between people under social relations. Through the description of the ambush apartment and the houses as well as the expression and language of the characters, the complex relationship between the people and the society is vividly depicted on paper. There is plenty of drama and fast-moving action to be found in this novel with some exciting set pieces. But the meticulous detail with which Balzac describes the boarding house lodging at Maison Vauquer and the penury of its inhabitants has attracted serious critical attention. He precisely describes, on one hand, the interiors of the shabby rooms, even the tiles, floors, walls and even the dirt or foul smell; on the other, the lavish mansions, luxurious rooms, extravagant social gatherings of the rich people with their stylish dresses and expensive jewels.

Moreover, he flawlessly describes the socio-economic chasm in society. The book opens with a lengthy description of this establishment in the old Latin Quarter of Paris. The high garden walls surrounding the house give the impression of entering a prison; its shabby sitting room is full of furniture that is "old, rotten, shaky, cranky, worm-eaten, halt, maimed, one-eyed, rickety, and ramshackle". The bedrooms are wretched and the nauseating smells from the kitchen permeate the whole place. For page after page, Balzac gives shape and form to this residence and breathes life into its tenants, detailing what brought them through the door of Maison Vauquer, what hopes they have for the future and how they relate to each other. The point is not simply to show the individuals involved in the drama but to depict a society patterned after the Parisian one. Here is the city in a microcosm where the guests are lodged and treated according to their financial means and social position. Their room within the house changes as their fortunes fluctuate. Goriot himself had started in prime position on the lower ground but as a bankrupt, he is despatched to the topmost and most decrepit room. It's a visible, uncomfortable reminder to Eugène of the fate that awaits him if his quest for higher social status should fail.

In the early 19th century, the vogue of critical realism had just started. Balzac stated the issue of authenticity of art specifically through the description of characters, details and the environment of *Goriot*, and illustrated the meaning of "art comes from life, but dramatizes life" vividly. Balzac impeccably shapes the unique environment and typical characters through his artistic expression. His profound and systematic treatment of realism paved the way for a new generation of literary and artistic realist writers, with the epoch-making significance. Balzac's particular way of combining fact with fiction, descriptions of settings with character analyzes, and individual life with social environment, has had an enormous impact on the subsequent course of the European novel.

But the critics have also found specific flaws in his treatment of realism. They complained if Balzac did set out to create a realistic and recognisable fictional universe, one which is 'neither a fiction nor a romance', and then he should, unfortunately, have left his romantic sensibilities behind. Balzac was a great admirer of Walter Scott, the arch-romantic novelist of *Ivanhoe* and *Rob Roy*. Scott influenced Balzac through his depiction of the lower classes: writing out the poverty and hardship of the Scottish clansmen with some force and style. However, he also dressed it up with unrealistic plotlines and frantic melodrama. Balzac took this on board as well, marring his work with wild coincidences and extended scenes of overly dramatic pathos. When Goriot eventually falls sick and dies the scenes are drawn out into a

laughably prolonged series of agonies, culminating in one of the penitent daughters arriving minutes after her father has died and comically fainting. Although Balzac could describe a realistic and recognizable world, he seems to have struggled to fill it with realistic plots, destroying the verisimilitude which he had set out to achieve. In spite of the criticisms, the novel is widely considered to be a realistic masterpiece.

UNIT 3 (C): COMPARISON WITH SHAKESPEARE'S *KING LEAR*

Honoré de Balzac's *La Père Goriot* and William Shakespeare's *King Lear* were written in different periods and cultural contexts but they share remarkable similarities in their exploration of certain thematic elements. Both works delve into the complexities of familial relationships, the destructive nature of ambition, and the tragic consequences of human frailty. It is interesting to note that Balzac was accused of plagiarizing William Shakespeare's play *King Lear* when the novel was first published as both prominently feature themes of filial betrayal. Critics were quick to note that Goriot's daughters, Delphine and Anastasie, callously abandon and betray their father in pursuit of their own ambitions, disregarding his love and sacrifices. Similarly, in Shakespeare's play, Lear's two elder daughters, Goneril and Regan, deceive him with false flattery, ultimately leading to his downfall. The works explore the heart-breaking reality of children turning against their parents, questioning the very foundation of familial bonds.

Anyone familiar with the storyline of *King Lear* would know that *Goriot* follows a similar plot and is concerned with the same principal theme. Shakespeare's character King Lear is a rich patriarch who divides his kingdom for the sake of his daughters – only to be then neglected and betrayed by two of them. In Balzac's novel, we see how Goriot sacrifices everything for his daughters. The aim of his pathetic life is to provide everything for his thankless daughters and spare them of any kind of difficulties that might happen due to the lack of money. Balzac refers to him in the text as the "Christ of paternity" for his constant suffering on behalf of his children. In *Goriot,* the sisters Anastasie and Delphine, behave towards their father exactly like Goneril and Regan do towards their father King Lear. They take all his money and keep demanding more while showing him no respect or thanks at all. The only concern of Delphine and Anastasie is to gratify their own desires and to rise in the hypocritical Parisian society. The fact

they abandon him, lost in their pursuit of social status, only adds to his misery. And similar to the plot of *King Lear*, their husbands seek control of the daughters' inherited wealth to support their own ends. Anastasie squanders huge sums of money paying off her lover's gambling debts, while Delphine's husband Nucingen wants the money to support his dubious property development schemes. Both daughters pretend to be respectful but shamelessly neglect their father. Neither of them can be bothered to be present when he is dying, and even at his funeral they send token empty carriages. Despite the betrayal they face, both Goriot and Lear exhibit profound parental love and sacrifice. Goriot's unwavering love for his daughters drives him to the brink of ruin, while Lear's initial desire to divide his kingdom is motivated by his love for his daughters. Both characters are willing to give up everything for the sake of their children, showcasing the depths of parental affection and the tragic consequences it can bring.

The end of the book contrasts Goriot's deathbed moments with a festive ball hosted by Madame de Beauséant, attended by his daughters, suggesting a fundamental schism between society and the family. The death scene of Goriot is at once melodramatic, and yet decidedly poignant. Though we must mention that Delphine at least drops in to see her father, but the visit comes too late to cause Goriot any happiness. He dies with a lie on his lips as he says of his two neglectful daughters: "My angels". Balzac paints a stark picture of the scene at the cemetery, as the driven but otherwise empty carriages of Delphine and Anastasie follow the funeral cortege to preserve appearances. Owing to these similarities, critic George Saintsbury claims that Goriot's daughters are "as surely murderesses of their father as [Lear's daughters] Goneril and Regan". Herbert J. Hunt points out in *Balzac's Comédie humaine* that Goriot's tale is in some ways more tragic, since "he has a Regan and a Goneril, but no Cordelia".

The parallels with *King Lear* are neatly completed by the minor figures of Taillefer and his daughter Victorine. The dubious Taillefer is a fabulously wealthy man who has unjustly disowned his daughter. She loves him with unquenchable devotion and exhibits some of the features of the third daughter Cordelia from the Shakespeare tragedy. Cordelia is rejected by Lear throughout the drama but then is reunited with him only in death. Victorine too is ultimately reunited with her father on his deathbed, but she does inherit his wealth.

King Lear, which of course antedates the tragedy of Pere Goriot by possibly two hundred and twenty five years, shows that royalty can make the same mistakes as the common man. As the

aged Lear has heartache upon heartache heaped upon him, we realize that the prerogatives of parenthood must have some reciprocal responsibilities as well. He grievously utters,

> "How sharper than a serpent's tooth,
> it is to have a thankless child."
> (Act 1, scene 4, lines 282-3)

This quotation may have been taken from *King Lear* but it is also very apt for Balzac's novel. Both stories tell of misplaced loyalties, thankless children and self-knowledge, which comes too late. Both eponymous characters surrender their fortunes to their daughters, except for Cordelia in *King Lear*, only to find themselves outcasts. Old Goriot starts out as a wealthy retired merchant but ends the tale as a pauper in a pauper's grave.

In both narratives, the protagonists undergo a journey of self-realization and tragic redemption. Goriot, in his dying moments, realizes the true nature of his daughters' deceit and laments his own blind love. Lear, stripped of his power and driven to madness, gains insight into his own mistakes and develops empathy for others. Both characters experience profound personal growth through suffering, highlighting the transformative power of tragedy.

La Père Goriot and *King Lear* offer scathing critiques of their respective societies. Balzac's novel presents a critique of the Parisian bourgeoisie, highlighting moral decay, social stratification, and the destructive pursuit of wealth and status. Shakespeare's play reflects on the corrupting influence of power and the inherent flaws in the social and political systems of the time. Both works question the prevailing values and norms of their societies, exposing the dark underbelly of human ambition.

Henry James however, in his essay on Balzac, casts doubt on the novelist's acquaintance with the Shakespeare text:

> Balzac's masterpiece, to our own sense, if we must choose, is *Old Goriot*. In this tale there is most of his characteristic felicity and least of his characteristic infelicity. Shakespeare had been before him, but there is excellent reason to believe that beyond knowing that *King Lear* was the history of a doting old man, buffeted and betrayed by cruel daughters, Balzac had not placed himself to be in a position to be accused of plagiarism. He had certainly not read the play in English, and nothing is more possible than that he had not read it in such French translations as existed in 1835.

The accusation of plagiarism simply does not arise. Shakespeare himself took the plot outline of his play from an earlier source (*Holinshed's Chronicles*) and even if Balzac was intimately acquainted with the *Lear* text, he transforms and re-imagines the story line completely, making it into something quite different, quite unique in its own merit. Regardless of exactly how the idea for the novel came to Balzac, this simple idea for a story gave him the vehicle to dissect the moral failings of the society he saw around him. They both explore the themes of filial betrayal, parental love and sacrifice, social critique, and tragic redemption. These shared elements reflect the timeless nature of human experiences and the enduring relevance of these literary masterpieces. Through their powerful narratives, Balzac and Shakespeare provide profound insights into the complexities of human relationships, the consequences of human folly, and the universal struggles of the human condition.

UNIT – 4

UNIT 4 (A): HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PERIOD – SOCIETY, ECONOMY AND POLITICS

Honoré de Balzac wrote in *Goriot,* "Money is life. If you have cash, you can do anything" (*Old Man Goriot,* 205). Balzac, who was intimately acquainted with the hierarchy of wealth in the Restoration society, revealed the veiled contours of money and its inevitable implications on the lives of men and women, most notably their material realities. With his sociological eye, Balzac depicted the effects of the disparity of wealth with an authenticity and evocative power that few empirical analyzes have been able to match. Balzac's stylistic approach in portraying social realism aptly identified the love of money which was the root of life in Paris at the time. His literary realism uncovered the importance and preponderance of economic realities over feelings and ideals. Balzac's work embodies an all-encompassing preoccupation with the material as money and its manifestations compose the structure and meaning of *La Comèdie humaine.* In the social and physical world Balzac created, the beginning and end of all feelings, beliefs, and mores was gold and its subsequent material benefits. However, it was not money alone that was of central importance to Balzac; it was the appearances that could be obtained with money, the destinies that could be unlocked by real material things and the power they signified.

The issue of money – the lack of it, the desire for it, the necessity of it – was absolutely integral to the world depicted in the novel. It would be ridiculous to suggest that money had never been mentioned in previous literary works, but it was regarded as a common part of everyday life which was impolite to discuss in detail. Besides, romantic novels were never excessively concerned with only money. This obsessive concern with money becomes the driving force and moral dilemma for the characters in *Goriot*. The selfishness and greed of the daughters of Goriot are held up for examination along with, by implication, the rest of the Parisian Bourgeoisie. To understand the place of money in Balzac's novel, it is necessary to study the history of that period. Approaching the second half of the 19th century, France was a European state whose social structure was completely changing. Every war was bringing pain and misery with it. France, which suffered from material and moral crises due to the damage received from the Seven Years' War, was not healing properly as it had to fight with hunger and poverty. With all these difficulties, the French People began to see the grim reality of their living conditions which was hitherto unforeseen. Philosophers like Jean Jacques Rousseau and Voltaire talked to the public about "freedom, equality, and fraternity" – these magic words brought the end of the king and the aristocrats with the popular revolution of 1789 (known as the French Revolution).

The newly established government led by Maximillian Robespierre was influenced by the Jacobin politician Louis de Saint-Just and they implemented the policy of "invasion of liberty". The people who hated the savagery caused by this policy united around the powerful leader named Napoleon Bonaparte. Under Napoleon's rule, the country was governed by an administrative system which mixed aristocracy and revolutionary principles for more than fifteen years. After Napoleon lost his power over the French people, France entered the historical Restoration Period. During this period, the monarchy and aristocracy came back again. By the end of the first quarter of the 19th century, France became the common interest of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. *Father Goriot* takes place in the Restoration Period when the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie were exploiting the common people for the sake of accumulating more and more wealth. At the beginning of the Restoration Period, the bourgeoisie, who inherited the legacy of the aristocracy, was living through its golden era. The consequences of the corrupt habits of the bourgeoisie were being felt in every corner of the society. On the contrary, the majority of the French citizen was fighting with acute poverty. The poor people never benefited from any of the political power shifts and the wealth of the nation was enjoyed by the already rich aristocracy, and then the bourgeoisie class. The

writers of the period noticed that the system in which the powerful exploits the powerless never changed even if the rulers changed or revolution happened.

Although written and published 1834-1835, the story told in *Le Père Goriot* begins in 1819 when France was in the midst of a fierce struggle to establish a new national identity which would incorporate both the monarchical past and the political reality following the revolution. After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815, the victors had returned the Bourbon Louis XVIII, the executed king's brother, to the throne. But even with a new king there was no way back to pre-revolutionary times. The "émigré aristocracy demanded indemnities for their losses – the return of their properties and renewed privileges of all sorts. At the same time, the Industrial Revolution was taking hold in France and a wealthy new commerce-based bourgeoisie was emerging. Consequently, a struggle between the two groups was inevitable. The volatility of the class and financial structure is clear in *Goriot* as all the characters must fight for a place in the changing society. In 1824 Louis XVIII died and was replaced by Charles X under whose reign the Restoration government became increasingly conservative, increasingly repressive, and increasingly out of touch with the times. Unhappiness with this new ruler led to the 1830 revolution which forced him from power and led to the installation of Louis-Philippe, who seemed to understand the social and economic changes that had taken place and worked to win over the commercial middle class. In 1834, France was entering a new age of laissez-faire capitalism in which the fierce pursuit of money was triggering a moral crisis. Social and cultural bonds which had once rigidly held society together had been strained with shifting power relations, often tied to the vicissitudes of the new fortunes which were to be made during and following the revolution. Much of the tension in the novel comes from the fact that in spite of the massive and increasing forces pushing for social change, "In many respects . . . the economic and social structures of the ancient régime survived until the 1840s". Balzac had the advantage given by hindsight and *Le Père Goriot*, which is not a long work, manages to give a glimpse of practically every aspect of the dynamic French culture of the time, from the direst poverty to the new wealth, from the restored aristocrats to the new business elite.

In this period when history was so turbulent, literary realism appeared as a medium of venting frustration and stirring public revolt. Although a great depression that emerged with political uncertainty had taken over every part of the country, the people who had suffered for years could see only one goal – they wanted to have a voice in politics. In the literary arena, people began to discard Romanticism as an obsolete form unable to voice their frustrations and anger

at the contemporary socio-economic crisis. Over the years, there has been a growing annoyance against romanticism as people wanted to read narratives which reflected the truths and realities surrounding their lives. Naturally, the most prominent crisis that threatened the society at that time was that of money. The value of money in the 19th century had taken precedence over the human values. Money had outstripped all human worth. History had come to such a juncture that solidified this notion – a person with money would dominate and smother the financially weaker section of the society. Balzac who was one of the most important realistic writers presented this money-centred reality to people in a brilliant way in *Old Goriot*.

UNIT 4 (B): MONEY AND MATERIALISM IN *GORIOT*

In *Père Goriot*, the lives of a young law student, Rastignac, and an elderly neighbour in his boarding house, Goriot, intertwine in 19th-century Paris. Neither of these men has much money—Rastignac was born in a struggling country estate, and Goriot is a retired pasta-maker—yet they both end up ensnared by a society that values wealth above all else. Many of the principal characters live in 'Maison Vauquer' and much of the action is centred there. The way the guests are treated at the Maison Vauquer immediately takes up the theme of the power of money in society. Boarders who can pay more have comfortable and attractive lodgings closer to the ground floor. The boarders who cannot pay as much are moved up the stairs to less desirable rooms. As Goriot's financial condition worsens, he is moved higher and higher in the boarding-house until at the end, penniless, he dies in a small, squalid attic room. At the end, even the funeral arrangements, including the religious services, are seen to be monetized relationships. In the character of Goriot, we see the rise and fall of an inherently good man. Goriot's story is crucial to the development of all aspects of the novel and Goriot is clearly the 'ideal type' of the ignored and abused father who is seen simply as a source of money. Goriot is the most tragic figure, the one whose death reveals the heartless materialism of Parisian society. Goriot's identity in the novel is tied to his financial history. We are told about his past, before the main action of the novel begins, when he first became wealthy by taking advantage of shifting historical conditions to make money in the grain market. Goriot succeeded in business once but the novel is the story of how his fortunes decline. Goriot's wealth came originally from commerce and then later from the money he had invested so that he could live

off the income. After providing his daughters with dowries and then selling his bonds and cashing out his investments to continue to give them money, Goriot was reduced to selling his clothes and silverware to find money to live and to give the women the money they continued to ask him for. The relationship between Goriot and Rastignac is the central thread of the novel, and every contact they have with every other character involves money. Through a distant cousin Madame La Vicomtesse de Beauséant, Rastignac comes in contact with Goriot's two daughters: Anastasie de Restaud, who has been giving large sums of money to her lover Count Maxime de Trailles, and Delphine de Nucingen, recently abandoned by her lover de Marsay. The daughters' relationships with their husbands, their lovers, and their father have much to do with getting and spending money.

The naïve Rastignac, once introduced to Goriot's wealthy daughters, begins to desire their lifestyle, and gets drawn into their way of life. Meanwhile, Goriot impoverishes himself in order to ensure that his daughters can maintain their lifestyle despite chronic financial problems. Through these men's lives, Balzac argues that his society's obsession with money distorts and consumes everyone who is caught up in it, twisting people's sense of reality and never delivering the security they crave. After visiting Goriot's richly married daughters and seeing their extravagant homes, Rastignac observes that wealthy people have a completely different lifestyle and worldview: "His imagination [soared] into the upper reaches of Parisian society, […] while broadening his mind and his conscience. He saw the world as it is: laws and morality unavailing with the rich […] 'Vautrin is right, wealth is virtue,' he said to himself." To put it in a different way, wealth even creates its own system of morality, in that people who possess wealth are not bound by the same laws that govern the rest of society. Rastignac finds such a world mysteriously appealing. When Rastignac returns home from visiting his new wealthy friends, he is shocked by the difference between their lifestyle and the shabbiness of his boarding house: "He was revolted at the sight of such wretchedness […] The transition was too abrupt, the contrast too complete, not to arouse in him cravings of boundless ambition. On the one hand the fresh and charming images of the most elegant society […] on the other, […] faces on which passions had left behind only their strings and mechanism." Now that Rastignac has seen wealth firsthand, he covets it for himself—life in the boarding house, which was tolerable before, no longer seems acceptable to him. Rastignac idealizes the wealthy world to which he has been introduced, and in light of it, a modest lifestyle appears to be intolerable to him.

This briefest of sketches shows clearly the role of money in the work. In this, of course, he is not alone as all the characters are defined at least in part as to how money affects their relation to one another. Mademoiselle Tailliefer's relationship with her father and brother is based on money. Poiret and Michonneau betray Vautrin for money. Vautrin's position in the criminal world is based on the trust the criminals have in him to manage their money. And of course, the lives of Goriot and Rastignac are determined to a large extent by the quest for and the lack of money. Even at the end, when Goriot lies on his death bed, Madame Vauquer, in spite of her friendly words, is concerned only about the payment of the rent and the cost of the sheet which will be used to wrap his dead body.

The novel also highlights how the outward appearance of wealth masks a more complex reality, as a wealthy lifestyle demands a constant supply of money to maintain the appearance. Goriot's daughter Delphine explains to Rastignac, "That is how half the women in Paris live; outward luxury, within—the cruellest worries. I know poor creatures even more wretched than myself. Some women are obliged to get their tradesmen to draw up false accounts. Others are forced to cheat their husbands. […] There are some poor women who make their children go hungry and have to scrounge to get a dress." Wealth comes with a cost: once someone attains a certain position in society, one must constantly fight to maintain that position, or at least the *appearance* of that position, even at a great cost to one's integrity and happiness. Rastignac eventually succumbs to the appeal of the life of Parisian luxury, especially after being set up in a luxurious apartment when Delphine becomes his mistress: "his remaining scruples had disappeared […] By enjoying the material advantages of wealth, […] he had sloughed off his skin as a provincial, and smoothly moved into a position from which he could look forward to a fine future. […] he saw himself so far removed from the Rastignac who had come to Paris the year before, that, […] he asked himself if at that moment there was any resemblance between his two selves." Now that Rastignac has access to the rewards of the wealthy class, loyalty to his poorer, provincial upbringing which he had once imagined to be essential to his identity is set aside. This suggests that the lifestyle created by materliastic greed always leaves a distorting effect on a person's identity.

There is a clear moment when Rastignac sees the nature of the world he is trying to enter. Having realized the importance of wealth, Rastignac is immediately tested as to how far he will go to get money when Vautrin tells him about Mademoiselle Taillefer's problems with her father and how his money will be left to her brother after the father's death. Vautrin proposes a unique solution: he would have someone challenge the brother to a duel and kill him so that

the father would be forced to reconcile with the girl as she was his only heir. Rastignac could marry her and acquire the huge fortune she will inherit and would then give Vautrin a share so he could carry out his plans of buying a plantation in America and living off the work of his slaves. Rastignac rejects the offer and Vautrin laughs at Rastignac's scruples and explains:

> [You see, Paris is like some great forest over in America, where there are twenty different tribes of Indians, Illinois and Huron and the rest, each of them living a life that's structured by a completely different sort of hunting, and what you're hunting is millions. If you're going to catch them, you have to use traps and snares, decoys and lures. There are all sorts of ways to hunt millions. Some go after dowries; some look for estates being settled. . . Any hunter who comes back with his bag stuffed full is welcomed, celebrated, received by high society. (87-88)]

Although he does not agree to be a part of this plot, this cynical attitude is actually the same attitude that will eventually come to guide Rastignac's pursuit of success.

Goriot assures his daughters regarding the financial straits that he willingly endures for the sake of their comfort, "The knowledge that you were comfortable and happy as far as money was concerned relieved all my pains and soothed my woes. Money is life. Cash can do anything." But in the meantime, Goriot becomes increasingly impoverished. At the end, both daughters are still hounding Goriot for more money: Delphine's husband has taken control of her fortune and Anastasie has sold the family diamonds to pay her lover's gambling debts. The stress of hearing about these problems causes Goriot to suffer a fatal stroke. After Goriot's death, Rastignac and his medical student friend, Bianchon, have to scrape together the funds to have the old man buried, since his wealthy sons-in-law refuse to contribute. By this time in the novel, Rastignac, too, has become more cynical about the way money consumes people's lives and distorts their moral compasses. Though his care for the dying Goriot suggests that he is not corrupted by it, Rastignac also does not know how to extricate himself from the materialistic system he has chosen to enter. A Fierce struggle to make money leads only to spiritual bankruptcy and misery. After Goriot is buried, Rastignac issues a challenge to Parisian society from the heights of the Père Lachaise cemetery that he will succeed no matter what. He then goes to have breakfast with Madame Nucingen, who he believes will provide his way to wealth and power. Balzac must be seen as one of the first novelists to see clearly how the pursuit of money, the importance of money, in a capitalist society could lead to the monetization of human relations.

UNIT 4 (C): SOCIAL ELITISM AND STRATIFICATION OF CLASS

Balzac, in his novel, shows the gap between the noble and the lower class, the lifestyle of the people in Paris, and the class discrimination present in the French community during the 1820s. While the hard living conditions of the poor are presented through the detailed description of the Vauqer Mansion, the places where the noble live are presented through magnificent houses. The Parisian high-society is built on the principles of female depravity, male vanity and endless craving for wealth.

One of the main themes in *Le Père Goriot* is the quest to understand and ascend society's strata. The Charter of 1814, granted by King Louis XVIII, allowed only a small group of the nation's most wealthy men to vote. Thus, Rastignac's drive to achieve social status is evidence not only of his personal ambition but also of his desire to participate in the body politic. Rastignac epitomizes, in his words and actions, the *Zeitgeist* in which he lives. Through his characters and narration, Balzac lays bare the social Darwinism of this society. In one particularly blunt speech, Madame de Beauséant tells Rastignac:

> "The more cold-blooded your calculations, the further you will go. Strike ruthlessly; you will be feared. Men and women for you must be nothing more than post-horses; take a fresh relay, and leave the last to drop by the roadside; in this way you will reach the goal of your ambition. You will be nothing here, you see, unless a woman interests herself in you; and she must be young and wealthy, and a woman of the world. Yet, if you have a heart, lock it carefully away like a treasure; do not let any one suspect it, or you will be lost; you would cease to be the executioner, you would take the victim's place. And if ever you should love, never let your secret escape you!"

This attitude is further explored by Vautrin, who tells Rastignac: "The secret of a great success for which you are at a loss to account is a crime that has never been discovered, because it was properly executed." This sentence has been frequently – and somewhat inaccurately – paraphrased as: "Behind every great fortune is a great crime."

The novel is considered to be a coming-of-age story though not in the traditional sense. Rastignac is an everyman at the beginning. He is initially repulsed by what he sees in the high society of Paris. His experiences up to that point have been only with his poor family in a much smaller area, and the luxury of high society makes him uncomfortable because he

does not understand them. As he progresses through the novel, however, he is tutored in the ways of this community, and he begins to embrace what he finds attractive. He sets aside his goal of being a lawyer and instead begins the social climb using money taken from his family and eventually exploiting his connections with women to spur his ascent. His story is driven by the theme of social class and social separation. Although Rastignac aspires to be a part of the wealthy elite, it is clear that he does not belong in that world and they will never fully accept him there. He is advised by several characters to act with a sense of ruthless ambition. There is no room for compassion in a world where people are sharply divided between rich and poor, powerful and powerless. Rastignac develops a keen sense of this ambition, using his relationship with Goroit's married daughter to improve his social status. This ambition corrupts what was initially a sense of honour in wanting to make a good living for his family. At the time, law was not quite the high paying profession as it is now, but it would have made a steady income for a poor family living in the south of France. He decides that this path is mere drudgery, and uses what little money his family has to jumpstart a life in the world of high society. It is a risk that a man with more honour might not have taken.

Balzac lived in France during political turbulence and lifestyle mixing of different classes. It was a time when social injustice was the biggest evil against which the lower classes could not fight. Hunger and poverty ruled most of the country while the upper classes enjoyed balls, socializing and all other perks of an aristocratic lifestyle. Balzac combined all of those motives into different elements of contemporary society by describing a small Mansion Vaquer whose owner was the widower Vaquer. People who lived in the mansion had their reasons to be there, and the common reason was the money they owned and made. The mansion is also socially structured, and people got the room they could afford. Balzac did that structure so he could present the social scale. Those who had more money had better rooms, and those who did not have a lot of it had to take what they got.

Much of the momentum of the plot results from Rastignac's determination to break into the world of the Parisian social elite. Moving in these social circles requires a complex combination of social connections, charm, cunning, and the ability to meet high standards of dress and behaviour. As Rastignac learns when he unwittingly offends Anastasie, an innocent mistake can cut someone off from society permanently. Although Rastignac is ostensibly a student of law, he actually devotes his time and energy in learning how to successfully maintain the deceptions and rituals required to function as part of Parisian high society. While Rastignac's

attempt to break into society is not easy, the process does show that it was possible for someone to advance their social position if they were intelligent and ambitious.

Madame de Beauseant warns her student against sincerity: in a world where everything is built on money and titles, in no case can real feelings be shown and especially true love. A person in Parisian society can be either an executioner or a victim and no third option is given. This novel, therefore, finds its complete unity not as a novel of characters but in its social context. Placed by Balzac among his "Studies in Social Mores," it depicts a corrupt, ruthless society, but one in which one has to live, to which one has to adjust or experience the fate of Mme. de Beauséant, Vautrin, and Goriot, and in which many, like Anastasie, Delphine, and Rastignac, want to succeed at all costs.

The primary activity of Balzac's Parisians is not to shape the world but to allot their efforts to secure the material aspects necessary to appear as though they have ascended to a higher social class. Balzac's moneyed classes only wish to see and be seen, like peacocks, showing off their plumage, content to trot about the palace grounds and peck at scraps of "the obvious material delights of Paris" (Old Man Goriot 28). Père Goriot is a masterful and accurate display of materialistic Parisian life, where "love is essentially vainglorious, shameless, wasteful, flashy, and false" (Old Man Goriot 199). In this central novel of La *Comèdie humaine,* we have come to identify and isolate the components of Balzac's social realism, an interpretive tool which enabled the transposition of the author's acute perception of social reality.

UNIT 4 (D): GREED AND CORRUPTION

Honoré de Balzac's *Goriot* is a novel that strongly depicts the post-revolution French society and points to the corruption and decay of the social system. Excessive greed and the eventual corruption stemming from it play significant roles in shaping the lives of the characters in this novel. These two elements also appear to be the driving forces of the narrative. The novel brilliantly depicts a society which is driven by pure materialism where individuals are willing to easily sacrifice or ignore moral values for personal gains. One of the most essential themes of the novel is greed. In fact, it can be said that greed for money is the unifying force as well as the prime motivator behind the actions of the novel. Individuals, relationships, and activities are all monitored by unchecked greed. One aspect of greed depicted in the novel is the relentless pursuit of wealth and social status. The characters are driven by their insatiable desire

for money, power and material possessions. They are willing to go to great lengths, including engaging in corrupt practices and betraying others, to achieve their goals. Corruption, both social and moral, is another central concern in the novel. Balzac vividly describes the decadent and morally bankrupt nature of the Parisian society of the time. The characters are entangled in webs of deceit, manipulation and hypocrisy. They engage in various corrupt activities, such as financial fraud, political manoeuvring, and exploiting others for personal gain. Balzac exposes the moral decay that occurs when individuals prioritize their own selfish desires over ethical principles.

The titular character Goriot, who is also the most sympathetic character of the novel, becomes a victim of this greed and corruption. He is a kind-hearted and selfless father who has sacrificed everything for his daughters, Delphine and Anastasie. However, we see both of Goriot's daughters are preoccupied with money only and they see their father as a source of financial support only. They exploit his love for personal advancement in the luxurious society. Goriot's wealth gradually diminishes as he lavishes it on his daughters, leaving him destitute and abandoned. Strikingly, the narrative does not punish the greedy characters, and Goriot, the one person who places love above money, dies a lonely and anguished death. His tragic fate symbolizes the destructive consequences of greed and the moral bankruptcy of society. In Balzac's world, a preoccupation with money seems to be essential for survival and success.

Eugene de Rastignac, the young law student who aspires to climb the social ladder, is also drawn into the world of greed and corruption. Initially, he is idealistic and morally upright, but he gradually succumbs to the temptations of the Parisian world. He arrives in Paris with good intentions but gradually becomes corrupted in the snare of the city's allure for social climbing and materialistic luxury. Ultimately, he has to make difficult choices between the ethics that he has learnt in his early life and the personal advancement that can be achieved only if he ignores those ethical values. His discovery of this decay and corruption of humanity in the Aristocracy is one of the main themes. Rastignac submits to the enticement of wealth and power, reflecting the pervasive influence of corruption in society. He witnesses firsthand the ruthless pursuit of wealth and power and realizes that he must adopt similar tactics to succeed. He is forced to make difficult moral choices and compromises, ultimately becoming a part of the corrupt system he initially despised.

In his thirst for advancement, Rastignac has been compared to Faust, with Vautrin as Mephistopheles. Critic Pierre Barbéris calls Vautrin's lecture to Rastignac "one of the great

moments of the *Comédie humaine*, and no doubt of all world literature". France's social upheaval provides Vautrin with a playground for an ideology based solely on personal advancement; he encourages Rastignac to follow suit. Still, it is the larger social structure that finally overwhelms Rastignac's soul – Vautrin merely explains the methods and causes. Vautrin convinces Eugene to consider killing Victorine's brother by tempting him with the prospect of gaining a huge sum of money. Although he rejects Vautrin's offer of murder, Rastignac succumbs to the principles of brutality upon which high society is built. By the end of the novel, he tells Bianchon: "I'm in Hell, and I have no choice but to stay there." Vautrin himself epitomizes greed and corruption. He is a cunning and manipulative character who represents the unscrupulous pursuit of wealth and power. He entices young men to engage in criminal activities to attain social advancement, highlighting the corrupting influence of greed.

Balzac portrays a society where money becomes the prime measure of success and individuals are judged solely based on their wealth and connections. At the boarding-house, we witness another example of money being the supreme instigator as the guests are lodged according to their financial capabilities. The character of Madame Vauquer, who owns the boarding-house, also embodies this theme of greed. She regularly exploits the vulnerable residents who are struggling to maintain their lives. She judges the residents by how much money they have and how much rent they are paying. For her, the individuals are nothing more than their bank accounts. She falls in love with old man Goriot when she believes he is rich but once his spending decreases, she starts despising him. Madame Vaquer prioritizes money above human relationships, demonstrating the corrupting effect of greed on interpersonal dynamics.

The book spurred the use of the word "Rastignac" in French to mean someone with cutthroat social ambitions and was the groundwork for later characters in his realistic style. Although Balzac is sometimes criticized for presenting such a negative view of people in the upper class, critics have praised his complex characters and attention to detail. The novel is an unrelenting look at what it means to be corrupted by unchecked greed and ambition. Through the theme of greed and corruption, Balzac criticizes the social hierarchy and values of his time. He exposes the dark underbelly of a society where materialism reigns supreme and individuals are willing to sacrifice their integrity and relationships for personal gains. *Le Pere Goriot* serves as a cautionary tale, warning against the corrosive effects of excessive greed and the moral degradation that accompanies it.

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SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Brian Nelson – *The Cambridge Introduction to French Literature*
2. Harold Bloom – *Honoré de Balzac*
3. Richard J. Cohen – *Honoré de Balzac: Pere Goriot*
4. Martin Kanes – *Pere Goriot: Anatomy of a Troubled World*
5. Ellis Cruse – *Pere Goriot*

ASSIGNMENTS

1. What do you understand by *La Comedie humaine*? Write about its major features.
2. What are the sources and general themes of *La Comedie humaine*?
3. How would you evaluate Old Goriot's extreme love for his daughters and the downfall that ensues from it?
4. Why has Old Goriot been called "A Christ of Paternity"?
5. How do you explain Goriot's agony and death? Describe his last moments.
6. Discuss Balzac's brilliant description of the boarding-house. What ideas about the society does he try to convey through its rooms and boarders?
7. Write a critical note on the character of Rastignac. Justify Rastignac's transformation in attitude at the very end of the novel.
8. Cite some incidents which are decisive in causing Rastignac's psychological change.
9. How would you analyze Vautrin's attitude toward Rastignac? Explain your understanding of their relationship.
10. Would you consider Vautrin as the villain of the novel? Justify your answer.
11. What is the role of the society and its rigid stratification of class in shaping the characters as depicted in the novel?
12. Evaluate the role of money in the novel.
13. What do you know about the Realist tradition of novel writing? What are the major characteristics of this tradition?

14. Pere Goriot has been labelled by critics as a “Realist” masterpiece. What are the literary techniques that the author has employed to accomplish the goal of describing the characters and the incidents as they truly are?
15. What are the most significant thematic concerns of *Pere Goriot* and what do they suggest about the French society of the time?
16. Why is *Pere Goriot* a poewerful critique of the early nineteenth century French society?
17. Attempt a comparative study between *Pere Goriot* and *King Lear*.
18. Analyze the theme of greed and corruption in the novel.
19. Would you agree with the view that the nineteenth century French society was excessively preoccupied with money and materialism? Discuss with suitable references from the novel.
20. Do you think the depiction of Paris in the novel does not remain as a mere setting but appear as a strong and powerful character in itself? Substantiate your views.

BLOCK II

UNITS: 5-8

DEATH IN VENICE

BY

THOMAS MANN

CONTENT STRUCTURE:

UNIT – 5

UNIT 5 (A): INTRODUCTION TO THOMAS MANN – LIFE AND WORKS

Paul Thomas Mann (1875-1955) was a German novelist, short story writer, social critic, philanthropist and essayist. He won the Nobel Prize in Literature in the year 1929. Mann's father died in 1891, and Mann moved to Munich, a centre of art and literature, where he lived until 1933. In 1905, Mann married Katja Pringsheim, the daughter of a mathematics professor at Munich. Katja was not only an excellent mother to their six children but also an indispensable help to her husband in dealing with his professional chores. His early tales, collected as *Der kleine Herr Friedemann* (1898), reflect the aestheticism of the 1890s but are given depth by the influence of the philosophers Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and the composer Wagner, to all of whom Mann was always to acknowledge a deep, if ambiguous, debt. Most of Mann's first stories centre in the problem of the creative artist, who in his devotion to form contests the meaninglessness of existence, an antithesis that Mann enlarged into that between spirit (*Geist*) and life (*Leben*). His highly symbolic and ironic epic novels and novellas are noted for their insight into the psychology of the artist and the intellectual. His analysis and critique of the European and German soul used modernized versions of German and Biblical stories, as well as the ideas of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Arthur Schopenhauer.

The cultured, conservative, and devoutly Protestant atmosphere of the Mann home became the subject of *Buddenbrooks* (1901), an epic of considerable complexity and clearly autobiographical elements. The book was Thomas Mann's first success and was hailed as a masterpiece. Illustrating the decline of a wealthy merchant family over several generations, *Buddenbrooks* employs the technique of portraying moral decay through physical deterioration. While finishing *Buddenbrooks,* Mann began to read Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Under the influence of their aestheticism, he began to lower the shield of protection which he had held around the traditional social and political order of his own upper middle-class milieu. Their writings enhanced his understanding of himself as a "lost bourgeois," and he became immediately fascinated by the polarity between artist and bourgeois, spirit and nature, death and life. The two long short stories *Tonio Kröger* (1903) and *Death in Venice* (1913) are the most renowned treatments of this theme.

Quite in keeping with the psychologically mature realism of the Russian writer Tolstoy, whose works he had come to admire, Mann refused to follow what he considered the exaggerated pathos and flights of fancy of the expressionists of his day. Especially Mann's refusal to use his art as a medium for liberal political thought led to a growing alienation between him and his brother Heinrich, a well-known novelist himself. At the beginning of World War I, when Thomas Mann justified Germany's expanding militarism by referring to it as "the right of ascending power," the break between the brothers became complete. It was only after the war, when Thomas began to change his views, most comprehensively laid down in his autobiographical *Reflections of a Non-Political Man* (1918) that they became reconciled and remained full of respect for each other's work until Heinrich's death in 1950.

With the establishment of the German (Weimar) Republic in 1919, Mann slowly revised his outlook; the essays “Goethe und Tolstoi” and “Von deutscher Republik” (“The German Republic”) show his somewhat hesitant espousal of democratic principles. His new position was clarified in the novel *The Magic Mountain*. In the 1920s, Mann began to take very seriously his mission to concern himself with the issues of his time. He even went on political lecture tours, opposing the right-wing extremists already beginning to undermine the new, wobbly Weimar Republic. He pleaded for a democratic Germany's mediating role between East and West. Time and time again, he called upon the conservative and Socialist elements to settle their disputes and to unite against their common enemy, the rising tide of Nazism. In 1929, Thomas Mann was awarded the Nobel Prize for *Buddenbrooks.* This drew the protest of many liberals who felt the committee in charge was politically insensitive and irresponsible or else it would have awarded the prize on the basis of *The Magic Mountain,* radiating Mann's emerging humanism more convincingly. A year later, *Mario and the Magician* was published, a fierce attack on fascism.

In 1933, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Richard Wagner's death, Mann gave a brilliant lecture on the agony and greatness of Wagner, magnificently uncovering Schopenhauer's metaphysics of deliverance in his compositions and describing him as an ingenious representative of the German cult of irrationalism. A day after the fateful lecture and twelve days after Hitler's takeover, Mann crossed the border into Switzerland. The official Germany responded by depriving him of his citizenship and his honorary doctorate. He stayed in Switzerland until his emigration to the United States, where he eventually settled at Pacific Palisades, California, in 1938. Throughout his exile, Mann thought of himself as the

representative of the true German spirit, in whose name he directed bitter attacks on the Nazi regime. At the same time, he did not conceal his disgust with the Western democracies which had done so little to aid the young Weimar Republic while there was time to discourage Hitler. Mann had been afraid of appeasement, and the Munich Agreement of 1938 was to prove him right. In Franklin D. Roosevelt's politics, Mann saw what he called the "social democracy which in the economic and political realms will have to replace the liberal kind." Mutual appreciation tied the two men together, dating back to 1935, when, at Roosevelt's suggestion, Mann had been awarded an honorary doctorate from Harvard. Mann publicly endorsed Roosevelt and went so far as to campaign for his fourth term.

Joseph and His Brothers (1943), a tetralogy on the ascent of humanity from mythical beginnings to enlightened heights, was Mann's most famous creation during his exile. *Doctor Faustus* (1947), a semi-allegorical representation and attempted explanation of the German tragedy during Nazi rule, was highly acclaimed. After World War II, Mann was severely criticized in Germany because he had left his country in time of gravest need. More than anything else, his violent attacks on the Nazi regime — in the form of radio broadcasts from faraway America — created bad feelings. He never resettled in Germany. What hurt the U.S. citizen (since 1944) Thomas Mann even more, however, was the rise to political power of Senator Joe McCarthy. Mann, who for more than two decades now, had committed himself, ever more enthusiastically, to the ideals of American democracy, was forced by the senator's Committee on Un-American Activities to quit his position as Consultant in Germanic Literature at the Library of Congress. Mann was now a man of seventy-eight, and, disillusioned with America, he returned to Switzerland. As he put it, "America's liberty is suffering under its defense, and some fear it's about to fall apart." Two years later, in 1955, he died in Zürich.

UNIT 5 (B): CHAPTER-WISE DETAILED SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF THE NOVELLA

Chapter – 1

The novel opens by introducing the renowned writer, Gustav Aschenbach, known since his fiftieth birthday as von Aschenbach. On an afternoon in May, in an unspecified year early in the 1900s, Von Aschenbach sets out on a solitary walk from his apartment in Munich and starts ruminating on his morning’s work which was occupied with a particularly demanding session

of writing. Tired, he hopes some fresh air would "restore him and help him have a profitable evening." In the street, he starts reading the various inscriptions on a nearby Byzantine-style mortuary, referring to the afterlife. A storm starts brewing and he suddenly notices a strange man with red hair (evidently a tourist) on the mortuary's porch and feels a stirring within himself a youthful and ardent desire to travel. In a sort of daydream, he vividly envisions tropical scenes with lush vegetation, exotic plants and animals. He sees the eyes of a crouching tiger in some bamboo. His daydreaming episode is narrated in a highly charged language evoking a combined sense of fertility, decay and eroticism. He quickly masters his state of *wanderlust* and returns to his habitual mindset – one of willful efficiency, moderation, and fastidious self-discipline. He believes perfectionism to be the essence of artistic talent and that excessive passion impedes a writer's pursuit of excellence.

Up until this point, Aschenbach had never been tempted to leave Europe because of his desire to work at writing and his "European spirit." Now that he is growing old and fears that his artistic powers are faltering, he feels a sudden need to travel and escape from the duty of writing. Now, somewhat late in his life, he worries that he has always confined himself mostly to Munich. He experienced writer's block that very morning and felt that, although his work is still well received by the public, it lacks the sparkle of his younger work. However, he also craves some kind of escape from his work. He has been feeling dissatisfied with his writing. He starts thinking that his work might benefit from an element of inspired improvisation. After much internal debate, Aschenbach finally concludes that he needs to travel to "an exotic atmosphere." He decides to spend "a siesta of three or four weeks at some well-known holiday resort in the charming south of Europe" as a short vacation might improve his productivity. Looking again for the red-haired man, Aschenbach finds that he has vanished as suddenly and mysteriously as he had appeared.

Chapter – 2

Aschenbach is the son of a high-ranking legal official descended from a family with a long tradition of austere and disciplined service to the Prussian state. His father's side of the family had been "officers, judges, bureaucrats," with "disciplined, respectable, frugal lives." His sensual Bohemian mother, whose ancestry lent a foreign appearance to the writer's face, was the daughter of an orchestra conductor from Bohemia. The narrator explains that it was this marriage between disciplined conscientiousness and darker, more passionate inclinations that made Aschenbach the artist he is. Von Aschenbach married quite young, but his wife died soon

thereafter. In this chapter, he is described as medium in height, dark, and with a large head on which he wears gold spectacles. His mouth is large and his eyes are tired.

In this chapter, the nature of von Aschenbach's work is revealed. He has achieved fame and notoriety as a novelist, short story writer, and critic. He has written an epic biographical novel of Frederick the Great, entitled *Maya,* and a novella entitled *The Wretched Figure*. An essay entitled *Art and the Intellect* added to his fame, and is described as equivalent in worth to Schiller's essay work. We are told that Aschenbach had always been bent on achieving fame and established a successful literary career early in his life. He has always worked hard and "had never known idleness, never known the carefree recklessness of the young." He grew up without any real friends and always hoped to live a productive life. Early in his life, von Aschenbach disciplined himself to become an artist. He grew up in solitude because he was too sickly to attend school, and his motto is "persevere." In his youth, his goal was to live to an old age and continue to produce great literature. To achieve this despite his illness-prone body, he knew he needed great discipline. He possessed both talent and discipline and still kept a rigid daily working schedule at the age of fifty. Aschenbach wakes early each morning by dashing cold water on his face and devotes his productive mornings to writing.

Aschenbach's dutiful devotion to work, however, wreaks havoc on his naturally fragile health, and he is constantly battling illness. Thus, central to both his life and his writing is the notion that all great things can exist only in "defiant despite" of suffering, poverty, physical frailty, corruption, and passion. For him, art is the triumph over these torments. The heroes of Aschenbach's books are those who are able to enact this triumph. The narrator posits that such heroes are "the heroes of our age," and that the appeal of Aschenbach's writing is based on the fact that the members of his generation recognized in his works a celebration of themselves and their own hard work, pursued doggedly even on the verge of exhaustion. While Aschenbach was headstrong and intellectually radical as a youth, he now considers his greatest achievement to be his attainment of dignity. He embodies the hero characters in his work: a somewhat passive, but ascetic intellectual. Von Aschenbach writes about the heroism of the weak, a self-possessed exterior hiding a dissolute interior, which is well suited to his times. As he grows older, his prose grows more stiff and formulaic and begins to be quoted as exemplary in official German textbooks. He reflects that there needs to be a "congruence" between an artist and his generation in order for a great work of art to be made. This was indeed true of Aschenbach's own life experience. An analyst wrote of Aschenbach that he often wrote of a

hero that stood in for “an intellectual and youthful masculinity that grits its teeth. . . while its body is pierced by swords and spears.” Throughout his work, one could find “the elegant self-control that conceals the sapping of strength and biological decay.” This kind of “heroism of weakness” resonated with the people of the time.

Chapter – 3

Two weeks after his walk in Munich, von Aschenbach takes a trip to a resort on an island in the Adriatic, populated mainly by Austrian tourists. He is dissatisfied with the location and boards an old Italian ship bound for Venice. On the ship, he notices a group of young men joined by an older man in a stylish suit and hat, but wearing rouge and dressed gaudily to appear younger. The old man is wearing makeup, a wig, and dentures. Von Aschenbach finds this man’s obvious attempts at recapturing his lost youth as a horrible act. Later, while taking his lunch, he attempts to see Venice outside but it does not appear properly due to the grey rain and mist. As the ship enters Venice, von Aschenbach puts his luggage into a gondola and finds himself standing next to the strange old man who was blabbering in his drunken state until his upper denture fell out of his mouth. He feels a little trepidation on getting into his gondola as the colour reminds him of a coffin and death itself but he becomes satisfied with the luxurious and comfortable seat. Suddenly he realizes that the gondolier is not taking him to his requested destination, the pier. The gondolier explains that the pier will not accept luggage, and refuses the writer’s request to turn back. When von Aschenbach’s gondola arrives at a landing stage, he disembarks, and the gondolier disappears before von Aschenbach can pay him. A nearby old beggar explains that he is the only unlicensed gondolier in Venice, and did not want to be caught by the municipal officials on the pier.

Von Aschenbach reaches his hotel. Later in the day, he arrives for dinner and observes that all nationalities are represented among the guests, but a Polish family consisting of three girls, aged fifteen to seventeen, and a beautiful boy of about fourteen accompanied by a governess, particularly interests him. Once in the dining room, he notices that the boy is “perfectly beautiful,” with “honey-coloured hair” and possesses classically Greek symmetrical beauty, found in Greek statuary. The girls are dressed severely and appear nun-like, while the boy has long curling hair as well as a “rich and pampered appearance” which makes it clear that he must be the favourite of the family. The Polish children’s mother arrives; a stylish and elegant woman whom Aschenbach imagines to be the wife of a high-ranking German government

official. Before leaving, the young boy stops and turns around, briefly meeting Aschenbach's gaze. While eating, he thought of very abstract things, including the nature of beauty and the "general problems of form and art."

The next morning, the weather is still quite grey. Von Aschenbach finds himself depressed and considers leaving Venice. Later in the morning, he sees the boy wading in the ocean and admires his beautiful legs. Aschenbach is stunned by the boy's "godlike beauty," evident in his appearance and graceful walk. He thinks the boy has the head of Eros and skin like marble. On the beach, the boy leads a group of about ten children. By listening to the children playing, von Aschenbach discovers that the boy is named Tadzio and that his closest friend is Jasiu. He sees Tadzio go swimming and is taken by the sight of the boy climbing out of the waves, which "inspired mythic ideas," about "the birth of the gods."At noon, von Aschenbach returns to his room and studies his old face and grey hair in the mirror. Afterwards, he finds himself in the same elevator as some young children, including Tadzio. He is standing so close to Tadzio that he begins to see him as a human being, rather than as a beautiful work of art. He sees that Tadzio's teeth look brittle and translucent as if he were sick, and concludes that Tadzio would not live to a very old age.

That afternoon, von Aschenbach goes for a walk around the city of Venice and starts feeling feverish as a result of the crowd and sirocco. He realizes the pollution of the city has made him sick, and decides to leave Venice and travel to a different location. The next morning when he sees Tadzio at the breakfast table, he almost changes his mind, but ultimately decides to continue his course. However, Von Aschenbach's luggage is put on the wrong train, forcing him to stay in Venice at least temporarily. Aschenbach finds himself surprisingly happy upon learning of this setback by thinking that it is fate and returns to the hotel. He sees Tadzio coming back from the beach and, with a combination of "joy and pain," realizes that it is because of Tadzio that he has been so reluctant to leave Venice.

Chapter – 4

Aschenbach decides to stay in Venice as he feels "bewitched" by the leisurely lifestyle of this vacation. He has never been able to stay away from work for very long and never indulged in much pleasure, but now he finds himself relaxing all day. He falls into a routine of watching Tadzio regularly with "adoration and study", especially during mornings at the beach. Every

morning, Aschenbach gets up early and is the first person on the beach. He sits in a position from where he can watch Tadzio. He watches Tadzio play and overhears him talking with his family. Since Aschenbach does not understand Tadzio's language, the boy's speech feels like music to him. He admires everything about Tadzio's behaviouvoyeur and appearance and his beauty reminds Aschenbach of what it was like for him to produce beauty through writing.

Thinking of Plato's Phaedrus (a work that discusses the nature of desire), Aschenbach remembers Plato's idea that beauty directs the soul toward heaven, thus justifying his obsession with Tadzio. In a delirious vision, he imagines an Ancient Greek scene of Socrates instructing Phaedrus under a tree outside of Athens (the setting of Plato's Phaedrus), casting himself as Socrates, and Tadzio as Phaedrus. Aschenbach's vision recreates Plato's dialogue, with the old, ugly Socrates teaching the young, attractive Phaedrus. Aschenbach imagines Socrates, lusting after Phaedrus, saying, "beauty is the path taken by the man of feeling to attain the intellectual—only the path, only a means, young Phaedrus." He writes in the presence of Tadzio, so that he can model his own writing on the beautiful form of Tadzio's body although afterwards, he feels exhausted and self-reproachful, as though he has done something base. However, he reasons that his readers will never know nor care from where his inspiration springs.

Aschenbach sees Tadzio the next morning and decides to say hello and introduce himself in a friendly manner. But just as he is about to say something, he feels his heart pounding and walks past Tadzio. He plans to stay in Venice indefinitely and puts all the energy and focus he used to devote to writing into watching Tadzio. He gets up every morning to watch the sunrise, which he sees in mythological terms as the arrival of Eos, the Greek goddess of the dawn. He compares Tadzio to Hyacinthus, a young man in Greek mythology who was loved by both Zephyrus (a wind god) and Apollo (the sun god), and who tragically died. As time passes, Tadzio begins to return von Aschenbach's attention, walking past his table and looking at him on the way to his family's cabana. Their gazes meet and Aschenbach takes this as a sign that "his friendly feelings and attention were not altogether unreciprocated." One day he discovers that Tadzio's family has gone to the city. He is caught off guard when he runs into Tadzio that night and smiles in surprise and happiness. Tadzio smiles back, looking like Narcissus. Von Aschenbach is shaken by this image and hurries away to collect himself. Seated on a hotel bench, although he knows it is absurd, he murmurs "I love you."

Chapter – 5

During the fourth week of his stay in Venice, von Aschenbach notices that the number of guests at the hotel is decreasing rapidly. The barber mentions one day about a disease but then refuses to elaborate on the matter. Aschenbach goes downtown immediately and identifies the smell of germicide in the air. The city is plastered with posters warning against eating seafood. He asks a shopkeeper about the smell, and the man dismisses it, saying that it is a precautionary measure against any illness that the bad weather may cause. At the hotel, Aschenbach looks for news, but cannot find anything except for vague rumours, warnings and reassurances. He feels that Venice is hushing up a dirty secret akin to his own secret of loving Tadzio, and is also concerned that Tadzio may leave to flee the disease. He follows the boy more regularly but there were some moments when he also wonders what his ancestors think of his emotions, desires and behaviour. But he justifies his obsession with the idea that it was the fashion in Ancient Greece for older men to love younger boys.

Aschenbach continues to search through German-language newspapers, which report an epidemic and criticize the Italian government for trying to hush it up. He confronts the manager of the hotel about the plans to disinfect Venice but he claims germicide is only a precaution. One day he attends a street singer performance in the front garden of the hotel. Tadzio is there, guarded by his governess and mother, who has begun to notice von Aschenbach's attentions. Aschenbach realizes that on several occasions Tadzio's family called him away when he seemed to get too near to him, so he tries to disguise his interest in the boy. When the singer comes around after the performance to collect money, Aschenbach asks him why Venice is being disinfected, and the singer denies the existence of any disease. The guitarist says it is merely a preventative measure because the sirocco (a warm wind) can be bad for people's health. He says there is no disease in Venice. But immediately after this conversation, he is accosted by two hotel employees who ask him questions about what he has revealed. The next day, von Aschenbach goes to a British travel agency, where a travel agent finally tells him the truth. He says that a fatal Indian cholera had first moved east to China, west to Afghanistan and as far north as Moscow. It moved along trade routes, showing up in some Mediterranean cities including Palermo and Naples. However, fearing the loss of tourism, the city is maintaining silence about the disease. The crisis in Venice has led to an increase in crime on the streets. The travel agent urges von Aschenbach to leave Venice immediately. Von Aschenbach imagines warning Tadzio's mother, although he has never spoken to her, but decides to collude

in the secret and say nothing. He has a bad dream that night, filled with fear and desire as he watches a savage crowd dance and howl to the music of a flute, and joins them in worship of what he terms the "strangergod". He wakes up unnerved and sees that most guests have fled the hotel. However, the Polish family remains, and von Aschenbach imagines everyone else might die so he can be left alone with Tadzio. After waking up, he no longer feels any shame in admitting his desire for Tadzio and decides to pursue him. Looking at Tadzio's young body, he begins to hate his own aged body.

Von Aschenbach wishes to please Tadzio and therefore begins to add colourful touches to his clothing. Next, he goes to the barber, who dyes his hair black, curls it, plucks his eyebrows, and adds makeup (rouge) to his face, to make him appear younger. One afternoon, Aschenbach starts following Tadzio through the streets of Venice. Tadzio looks behind him periodically, to see if Aschenbach is still following him. Aschenbach feels intoxicated by this knowledge that Tadzio knows he is following and does not try to stop or escape him. He trails Tadzio around Venice, and although the boy realizes what von Aschenbach is doing, he does not tell his family. He sits in a city square, and dreamily begins to talk as if he were Socrates in Plato's Phaedrus, a cipher for Tadzio. He argues that although artists try to renounce the abyss of moral degeneracy, they are still drawn to it. He concludes that he will go and "Phaedrus" will remain, and when "Phaedrus" no longer sees him, then he will go too. A few days later, von Aschenbach leaves his hotel for a walk and suffers from dizzy spells. Upon returning, he sees a large amount of luggage in the hotel lobby, and learns that the Polish family is leaving after lunch. He sees Tadzio playing with his friends, who are stronger than him, but less beautiful. Jasiu defeats Tadzio in a wrestling match, driving his head hard into the sand. Von Aschenbach is about to rescue him when the other boys stop Jasiu. Tadzio walks away and looks back at von Aschenbach, who sets out to follow him. Minutes later, the readers get to know that people nearby are rushing to the aid of von Aschenbach himself, who has slumped in his chair. He is carried to his room where he dies before the day is over. That same day, the world learns of the famous writer's death.

UNIT 5 (C): ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTER OF ASCHENBACH

Von Aschenbach, the protagonist of Thomas Mann's novella *Death in Venice,* is a complex and multi-dimensional character whose inner turmoil and self-discovery form the core of the narrative. His character undergoes a profound transformation as he grapples with themes of desire, art, beauty, and mortality. He is described as an ageing writer who is honourable, fastidious, and of high public status in Germany. At the beginning of the story, Gustav von Aschenbach is portrayed as a respected and extremely disciplined character, a symbol of rationality and self-control, who suppresses any unproductive desires for pleasure or leisure. Even his afternoon walk is deliberately calculated to increase his efficiency later in the day. As an artist, his entire life is devoted to his work. Even passing through the streets of Munich is an aberration from his daily routine, and is thus a precursor to his even more unprecedented trip abroad. He adheres strictly to his work routine, driven by a desire for literary perfection. However, beneath this rigid exterior lies a suppressed sensuality and longing for a more passionate and spontaneous existence. The naming of the central character is also significant as "Aschenbach" in German means "stream of ashes." There are two possible allusions: a. ashes of death, as in ashes to ashes, dust to dust; the name anticipates the theme of death; b. stream of ashes as an allusion to a volcanic eruption; this would point ahead to the eruption of the irrational, the id, out of the repression it suffers in Aschenbach's strictly disciplined existence. Perhaps already in these implications of the name we have allusions to the union of Eros (repressed libidinal instinct) and Thanatos (drive toward death and self-dissolution).

The opening chapter establishes von Aschenbach as an important personage in society and simultaneously begins to undermine him. First, the prefix "von" to the protagonist's last name demonstrates that he has achieved aristocratic status. Also note that Mann's parallel presentation of his main character and the current political circumstances establishes what will become a symbolic link between the two: The declining Aschenbach will come to stand for a civilization blinded to its inner decay and on the brink of inevitable war. The second chapter develops Aschenbach's character as a man who has overcome passion and the physical, achieving his successes by sheer force of will. Yet the fact that he has lived his entire life without really acknowledging his more impulsive side indicates potential future problems:

According to Freud, whose works Mann had read, repressed psychological drives soon rise to the surface; we can safely assume that it will not be long before Aschenbach must face the rearing head of his own reigned in nature. The second chapter provides a biographical sketch of the author.

His story closely parallels Mann's own history and artistic work. The sombre father and mother with more artistic blood are a direct reference to Mann's civil servant father and his mother with a Brazilian heritage. It soon becomes clear that von Aschenbach's personal life has been minimal to non-existent, making the nature of his artistic life extra-important in describing a personality the reader does not yet know well. In comparing von Aschenbach to the great German aesthetic theorist, Friedrich von Schiller, Mann clearly demonstrates his literary worth. This chapter also demonstrates that von Aschenbach forces himself into this extremely disciplined lifestyle, a practice he that began at a very young age. In fact, this is an unnatural state and is thus impossible to sustain. The last three chapters of the novella thus demonstrate how von Aschenbach behaves when he finally begins to live in an unclenched manner. From his descriptions of his lifestyle and writing hours, we get to know that in contrast to more sporadically inspired artists, Aschenbach writes through regular, productive stints of work. Aschenbach epitomizes the Apollonian artist—but how long can he continue to make art completely through rational discipline?

He travels to Venice and stays in a hotel where the beautiful boy Tadzio is also a guest. As he gives way to his repressed sexuality and falls in love with Tadzio while embracing the beauty and the sensual side of art, he also abandons morality and dignity, abandoning himself to passion, decadence, and ultimately death. Aschenbach's initial interest in the boy Tadzio is something he himself does not understand. From the very beginning, Tadzio represents pure artistic beauty. At first, Aschenbach believes that he can admire this beauty dispassionately, from a purely intellectual, aesthetic standpoint. Later, he will try to convince himself that he desires the boy only as an inspiration for more of his principled, dignified writing. By the end of the novella, however, Aschenbach will admit to himself that beauty and art, as represented by Tadzio, are corrupting: Tadzio will lead Aschenbach to abandon all morals and dignity, to surrender himself to decadent passion, as the gesture of "calm acceptance" here foretells. Von Aschenbach's encounter with this young Polish boy, Tadzio, becomes the catalyst for his gradual descent into a state of obsession and self-destruction. Tadzio represents the embodiment of beauty and youth, a vision that awakens a dormant desire within von

Aschenbach. This desire conflicts with his previous values and societal expectations, leading him into a moral and existential crisis. In the final chapter of a tragedy, inevitability catches up with the protagonist. Von Aschenbach begins to be more honest with himself about his false Platonic ideal, and begins to pursue Tadzio as an idol. Moreover, he becomes the rouge-wearing older man in search of youth that he so despised on the boat trip to Venice, when he changes his appearance to please Tadzio. The ending is slightly anti-climactic. In three short sentences, Thomas Mann brings us out of the claustrophobic world of the hotel in Venice, and widens the scope to the entire world. Von Aschenbach's personal history is finished, and the secret of his moral degeneration dies with him. Strangely enough, his public history remains unchanged, despite his experiences in Venice. His artistic reputation remains unharmed, and the world mourns the loss of a great author, and no more.

Throughout the story, von Aschenbach's character is marked by a constant struggle between his disciplined, rational self and his repressed desires. This conflict is evident in his internal monologues, where he oscillates between a longing for self-control and surrender to his passions. He is torn between the pursuit of beauty and the adherence to societal norms, which creates a profound tension within him. As the narrative progresses, von Aschenbach's internal struggles manifest in his physical and mental deterioration. His obsession with Tadzio becomes all-consuming, and he neglects his work, health, and hygiene. He surrenders to his desires and abandons the strict discipline that once defined him. This transformation represents a rebellion against his previous self, a desperate attempt to experience the forbidden pleasures of life.

Von Aschenbach's character also reflects the themes of art and creativity present in the novella. As a writer, he is deeply affected by beauty and aesthetics, and he seeks to capture and immortalize these sensations in his work. His infatuation with Tadzio becomes a source of inspiration, blurring the boundaries between art and life. However, this artistic pursuit leads him to his ultimate downfall, as his desire for beauty consumes him entirely. Furthermore, von Aschenbach's character can be seen as a representation of the tension between Apollonian and Dionysian forces in art. His disciplined and rational nature aligns with the Apollonian principles of order, harmony, and self-control. On the other hand, his repressed desires and eventual surrender to passion reflect the Dionysian aspects of art—chaos, intoxication, and surrender to primal instincts. The clash between these two forces within von Aschenbach's character underscores the complexity and contradictions inherent in the pursuit of artistic expression.

In conclusion, von Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* is a character whose internal struggles and transformation explore the themes of desire, art, beauty, and mortality. Mann presents him as a complex figure torn between the discipline of his rational self and the passionate longings of his suppressed desires. Through von Aschenbach's character, the novella examines the inherent contradictions and conflicts within the pursuit of beauty and the consequences of surrendering to one's forbidden desires.

UNIT 5 (D): DEPICTION OF THE CITY OF VENICE – CLIMATE, GEOGRAPHY AND CITIZENS

Thomas Mann's novella *Death in Venice* has captivated readers with its exploration of beauty, desire, and the clash between the rational and the irrational. Set in the enchanting city of Venice, the narrative intertwines the protagonist's infatuation with a young boy and his deep connection to the decaying city. Mann masterfully captures the dual nature of Venice, presenting it as a city of striking contrasts. On one hand, he depicts the city as a haven of beauty, a place where art, architecture, and history merge seamlessly. The lagoon, the canals, and the palaces are described with vivid and lyrical detail, painting a picture of a dreamlike destination. This portrayal effectively highlights the allure that draws the protagonist, Gustav von Aschenbach, to Venice. On the other hand, Mann also exposes the darker aspects of the city. Through the imagery of decay, he presents a Venice that is crumbling, both physically and morally. The oppressive heat, the decaying buildings, and the lurking sickness symbolize the hidden decay that exists beneath the surface of the city's beauty. This contrast between beauty and decay reflects the internal struggle within Aschenbach's character, mirroring his battle between reason and passion.

The story's location in Venice is important symbolically on many levels. It stands geographically at a mid-point between Asia and Europe, on the point where the perceived sensuality and exoticism of the East blend with the more restrained and "civilized" Europe. It is, therefore, symbolically fitting that Venice be the city where Aschenbach abandons his restraint and gives way to his sensual, passionate side. Also, Italy represents the sensuous south, in contrast to Aschenbach's austere native Germany; Aschenbach's physical journey from one culture to the other and from one climate to the other parallels his internal descent from cool control to fiery passion.

Venice is known as a place of decay: In literature, it is often the site of moral corruption; physically, the city is built on a lagoon, and each year sinks back a little farther into its swampy origin. By setting the story in Venice, Mann suggests that Aschenbach, like Venice, has been able to exist thus far only by virtue of pure will and is now beginning to decay. In particular, the city of Venice can be seen as a symbol for Aschenbach himself: Venice is unique for its daring construction; it is a city built in the middle of a lagoon, built and maintained by sheer willpower over the forces of nature. Similarly, Aschenbach considers true art to be the victory of the will over physical needs and natural impulses, and he considers himself to have accomplished such victories. Yet it is also well known that despite its mask of glory, Venice is gradually sinking, literally rotting from within; again, the same might be said of Aschenbach.

Venice is famous for its carnivals, at which revellers typically wear masks and other disguises. Thus, Venice represents the "dishonest" properties of art, art's ability to obscure the truth and lead people astray. The city acts as a metaphorical labyrinth, embodying the labyrinthine nature of Aschenbach's psyche. Just as the city's intricate network of canals and alleyways disorients and ensnares the protagonist, his infatuation with the young Tadzio entangles him in a web of conflicting desires and emotions. Furthermore, Venice represents the fleeting nature of beauty and the transient nature of life. The city's ephemeral existence, built on fragile foundations, echoes the transient nature of Aschenbach's infatuation and the inevitability of mortality. The city's proximity to the water, its constant battle with erosion, and the presence of the cholera epidemic emphasize the fragility of life and the inexorable march of time.

The warm, unpleasant weather reflects the growing feverish desire in Aschenbach. He decides that he has had enough of this vacation from his normal climate and his normal self. Aschenbach is glad to have an excuse to extend his stay in Venice. The city’s “odor of sea and swamp” emphasizes its exotic, sensuous quality, as well as its symbolic link to the unconscious (via the sea). The overcast weather could reflect the hazy, dreamlike quality of Aschenbach’s stay in Venice. Aschenbach’s decision to stay in Venice indefinitely reflects his resolution not to return to his prior, disciplined self. He now neglects his work and lives partially in a fantasy-world of ancient, mythological visions that arouse his desire for beauty. His short vacation has now become a permanent transformation of his life. Aschenbach’s physical travel to Venice is complemented by a kind of temporal travel, as he increasingly sees the world in ancient, mythical terms. Aschenbach’s gesture of “calm acceptance” is a kind of surrender: to the repressed parts of his personality now coming to the surface; to the intoxicating, seductive

atmosphere of Venice; and to his desire for Tadzio, which is becoming more concrete and related to the boy himself, less abstract and related to art.

Von Aschenbach describes Venice as a labyrinth, the presence of the water making it a mysterious and somewhat sick place. Of course, the city is literally sickened by the onset of the cholera epidemic and von Aschenbach's earlier description of it as a "tourist trap" rings true. If the Venetian authorities were honest about the medical state of the city, quarantine would be imposed and von Aschenbach would not be able to leave anyway. Ultimately, Venice traps von Aschenbach, becoming the city where the famous man buys overripe strawberries, contracts cholera, and dies. The spreading sickness in Venice, while important to the story's plot, is also symbolic of the sickness of passion overtaking Aschenbach. The fact that the Italians deny the severity of the health hazard augments Mann's portrayal of Venice as a place of artifice, deceit, and corruption. The British travel agent's realistic description of the spread of the disease pins down the vague sense that fate is out to get von Aschenbach. The description of the Ganges Delta resonates exactly with von Aschenbach's original dream in Chapter One of a dense and dangerous jungle. He is destined not only to die in Venice, but to die of this exotic, tropical disease. By reading backwards, this original dream finally takes its proper significance.

Citizens

In the novella, the Italian people play a significant role in shaping the narrative and influencing the protagonist's experiences. Mann's portrayal of the Italian characters provides insights into their cultural identity, societal norms, and their impact on Gustav von Aschenbach's emotional journey. Mann's portrayal of the Italian people in the novella often leans towards the use of certain stereotypes and generalizations. The Italian characters are presented as sensual, passionate, and exuding an air of ease and indulgence. Their carefree attitude toward life and their vibrant personalities create a sharp contrast with the reserved and disciplined nature of the protagonist.

Mann's depiction of the Italian people is primarily filtered through the perspective of the protagonist, Gustav von Aschenbach. As a foreigner in Venice, Aschenbach views the Italians with a sense of fascination, suspicion, and even disgust. We need to also understand that Italians are, most of the time, portrayed quite negatively in the novella. The men on the boat that takes Aschenbach to Venice are depicted as sycophantic, grovelling, and grotesque. The

gondolier is a known criminal, working without a license. The authorities that Aschenbach questions about cholera lie and tell him that the bactericide is being sprayed merely as a precaution. The barber at the hotel is snivelling and fawning, and he convinces Aschenbach that artificially enhancing his appearance will be a more "truthful" way of presenting himself.

This negative portrayal is probably not the result of any particular prejudice on Thomas Mann's part. Rather, Mann characterizes Italians in this way in order to reinforce his portrayal of Venice as a place of artifice, deceit, seduction, and moral corruption. These figures also serve to emphasize the overall tension in the novella: The reader immediately registers them as untrustworthy and feels that through association with them, Aschenbach is being led deeper and deeper into a labyrinth of danger. However, this outsider's perspective also introduces an element of exoticism and otherness. Aschenbach's idealized perception of the Italians may be influenced by his projection of desires and fantasies onto them. This suggests that Mann's portrayal of the Italian people may be more reflective of Aschenbach's own subjective interpretation than an accurate representation of the broader Italian culture.

Mann's depiction of the Italian people should be understood within the specific cultural and social context of early 20th-century Venice. The novella portrays a society that values beauty, aesthetics, and pleasure, which aligns with the broader cultural reputation of Italy as a centre of art, culture, and hedonism. Mann's portrayal may, therefore, be a reflection of the prevailing cultural perceptions and stereotypes of the time. Additionally, the depiction of the Italian people can be seen as a commentary on the clash between the disciplined, rational Germanic culture embodied by Aschenbach and the more passionate, indulgent Italian culture. The presence of the Italian people serves as a catalyst for Aschenbach's internal conflicts and the subsequent unravelling of his tightly controlled persona.

Climate

The author also offers a nuanced portrayal of the climate in the city of Venice. The climatic elements in the narrative play a significant role in shaping the atmosphere, enhancing the themes, and mirroring the inner turmoil of the protagonist, Gustav von Aschenbach. In response to Freud's writings, a psychological thrust occurred in literature with a focus on an examination of the human self in response to its environment. Von Aschenbach, as a sensitive

artist, is especially susceptible to his environment. Von Aschenbach's moods are closely tied to the weather, and he decides to leave his first vacation spot in search of another merely because the weather and atmosphere do not suit him. Throughout the novella, Mann vividly describes the intense and stifling heat that pervades the city of Venice. The oppressive climate serves as a catalyst for heightened tension and a metaphorical representation of Aschenbach's internal struggles. The sweltering heat becomes a physical manifestation of his repressed desires, as well as the growing conflict between his reason and his unruly passions. Mann skillfully employs the scorching heat to heighten the atmosphere of decay and decadence that permeates the narrative. Aschenbach's obsession with the young Tadzio intensifies in the stifling heat, paralleling the rising temperatures and the deteriorating state of his own psyche. The unrelenting heat becomes a symbol of the protagonist's internal turmoil, foreshadowing the tragic trajectory of his infatuation.

In the final climactic scenes of the novella, Mann introduces a violent storm that sweeps over Venice. The storm acts as a dramatic climax, both literally and metaphorically, representing the chaotic culmination of Aschenbach's desires and the impending tragedy. The turbulent weather mirrors the protagonist's emotional turmoil and the disintegration of his carefully constructed façade of rationality. Furthermore, the storm serves as a symbolic representation of catharsis and purification. As the rain pours down, washing away the decay and filth that plague the city, it signifies a release from the constraints of societal norms and the repression of desires. The storm brings a momentary respite from the suffocating heat, providing Aschenbach with a fleeting glimpse of redemption and clarity before his ultimate demise.

Mann's depiction of the climate in *Death in Venice* extends beyond its mere atmospheric effect. The climate becomes a powerful tool for symbolizing and foreshadowing the themes and events of the narrative. The oppressive heat represents the internal conflicts and desires that consume Aschenbach, while the storm acts as a dramatic representation of his tragic downfall. Furthermore, the climate in Venice reflects the transient nature of beauty and the inevitability of decay and mortality. The suffocating heat and the violent storm mirror the ephemerality and fragility of life, emphasizing the fleeting nature of Aschenbach's infatuation and the transience of his own existence. Thomas Mann's depiction of the climate is a skillful and symbolic portrayal that enhances the narrative's themes and reflects the internal struggles of the protagonist. The oppressive heat and the tempestuous storm serve as potent metaphors, representing Aschenbach's desires, his internal conflicts, and the tragic trajectory of his

infatuation. By utilizing the climate as a symbolic element, Mann adds depth and richness to the novella, further immersing readers in the unravelling world of Gustav von Aschenbach.

To conclude, while Mann's depiction of Venice is undoubtedly evocative and rich in symbolism, it occasionally leans towards the overly romanticized and idealized. The romanticized portrayal of Venice as a city frozen in time, untouched by modernity, can feel somewhat disconnected from reality. The absence of contemporary Venetian life and the exclusive focus on its historical and architectural grandeur may limit the readers' understanding of the city as a living, breathing entity. Additionally, some critics argue that Mann's portrayal of Venice relies heavily on stereotypes and clichés associated with the city. The decadent and morally corrupt nature of Venice, as depicted in the novella, perpetuates certain preconceived notions rather than offering a nuanced and multifaceted representation of the city. Thomas Mann's depiction of the city of Venice successfully captures the duality and symbolism associated with this captivating location. Through contrasting imagery, Mann presents Venice as a city of beauty and decay, acting as a metaphorical labyrinth that reflects the protagonist's internal struggles. However, the idealized and romanticized portrayal of Venice, coupled with the reliance on certain stereotypes, may limit a more comprehensive understanding of the city. Despite these criticisms, Mann's evocative description of Venice adds depth and richness to the narrative, contributing to the exploration of themes such as desire, beauty, and mortality.

UNIT – 6

THE POLARITIES IN THE NOVELLA

The first chapter additionally introduces a polarity around which the novella is conceptually structured: the opposition between Northern European self-restraint and Southern sensuality. Mann, following Plato, believed this conflict between conscious will and uncontrolled passion, between rational morality and passionate art, to be the crucial struggle in human existence. A descent to either extreme Mann saw as morally corrupting. While Aschenbach is characterized as the prototypical upstanding, stiff, and dignified Prussian intellectual, his vision of the tropical scene and his desire to travel south hint at the underlying passions that will lead him to the degradation and death promised in the book's title.

In Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, several polarities are explored, creating tensions and conflicts that drive the narrative and deepen the thematic exploration of the novella. Some of

the story's multiple polarities are: the conscious will vs. passionate drives; reason vs. passion, discipline vs. spontaneity; north vs. south; the Apollonian vs. the Dionysian; cerebral and lofty art vs. sensual and inspired art; civilization vs. decay; youth vs. age etc. In each of the above polarities, the first term refers to Aschenbach's initial state in the story, while the second term represents that toward which he slips over the course of the plot. These polarities in *Death in Venice* contribute to the exploration of themes such as the nature of art, the duality of human nature, the tension between reason and desire, and the fleeting nature of beauty and existence. The conflicts arising from these polarities serve to deepen the psychological and existential exploration of the protagonist and provide a rich tapestry of themes and ideas throughout the novella.

Mann suggests, following Freud and Nietzsche, that a balance between opposites must be maintained in order to have a healthy state of mind as an individual, and, on a broader level, to have a healthy culture. The maintenance of this balance, Mann suggests, is also crucial to the creation of true art. In those individuals who repress their drives excessively (such as Aschenbach), and in those cultures which repress their sensual, passionate sides (such as turn-of-the-century Western Europe, according to Nietzsche and Mann), it is only a matter of time before that which has been repressed will violently erupt, bringing destruction and ruin.

UNIT 6 (A): DISCIPLINE VERSUS DESIRE

In Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice,* the conflict between discipline and desire is a central theme that shapes the narrative and the character of Gustav von Aschenbach. The novella explores the tension between self-control and the pursuit of passion, and the consequences that arise from the imbalance between these opposing forces.

Von Aschenbach begins the story as an extremely disciplined character and a highly respected writer who epitomizes self-control and rationality and who represses any unproductive desires for pleasure or leisure. He follows a strict routine, adheres to societal norms, and suppresses his inner desires. Even his afternoon walk is deliberately calculated to increase his efficiency later in the day. As an artist, his entire life is devoted to his work. This disciplined approach to life is symbolized by his rigid work ethic and his dedication to his craft. However, beneath this veneer of control, there is a suppressed sensuality and longing for a more spontaneous and

passionate existence. The second chapter develops Aschenbach's character as a man who has overcome passion and the physical, achieving his successes by sheer force of will. Yet the fact that he has lived his entire life without really acknowledging his more impulsive side indicates potential future problems: According to Freud, whose works Mann had read, repressed psychological drives soon rise to the surface; we can safely assume that it will not be long before Aschenbach must face the rearing head of his own reigned in nature. The narrator emphasizes the links between an artist's life and work, and between art and the lives of those who view, read, or experience it. The peculiar quality of Aschenbach's writing is intertwined with his own life experience. His seemingly out-of-character vacation will affect not only him, then, but also his writing.

The foreign-looking man awakens in Aschenbach a repressed desire for travel, which can also be seen as a desire to break out of the usual habits of his disciplined lifestyle. It's never clear if the strange man is real or an embodiment of Aschenbach's subconscious desires. Aschenbach's vision of a beautiful, sensuously described destination can also be seen as symbolic of his desire to get in touch with his inner desires and urges. The tiger suggests that such a "visit" to the more primal parts of his self may be dangerous. Aschenbach's mind is divided. His self is clearly a mix of contradictory, conflicting desires and impulses. Much of this inner conflict centres on Aschenbach's devotion to his art, and what behaviour he thinks will best contribute to his work.

The arrival of the young Polish boy, Tadzio, disrupts von Aschenbach's disciplined and ordered world. Tadzio embodies beauty, youth, and a sense of unbridled desire. He becomes the object of von Aschenbach's infatuation, igniting a conflict within the protagonist. His desire for Tadzio contradicts his self-imposed rules and societal expectations, leading to a crisis of identity and morality. Aschenbach's initial interest in the boy Tadzio is something he himself does not understand. From the very beginning, Tadzio represents pure artistic beauty. At first, Aschenbach believes that he can admire this beauty dispassionately, from a purely intellectual, aesthetic standpoint. Later, he will try to convince himself that he desires the boy only as an inspiration for more of his principled, dignified writing. Aschenbach's disciplined devotion to his work begins to slip as he becomes more and more in thrall to his interest in the boy and spends more and more of his time in leisure. Aschenbach becomes gradually less disciplined, losing focus on his work, in order to pursue Tadzio's beauty. He idealizes Tadzio as beauty itself and, currently, doesn't seem to desire the boy erotically. By the end of the novella, however, Aschenbach will admit to himself that beauty and art, as represented by Tadzio, are

corrupting: Tadzio will lead Aschenbach to abandon all morals and dignity, to surrender himself to decadent passion, as the gesture of "calm acceptance" here foretells.

Aschenbach regards his trip to Venice as a temporary vacation that he is free to end at any time. However, he is finding it much more difficult to put an end to his trip than he thought, due especially to his infatuation with the beautiful Tadzio. He, who has always been so disciplined, can't re-assert discipline over himself. His struggle between discipline and desire intensifies as the narrative progresses. He becomes increasingly consumed by his infatuation with Tadzio, neglecting his work, health, and personal hygiene. He abandons his strict routines and surrenders to his forbidden longings. This surrender represents a rebellion against his previously disciplined self and a plunge into the chaotic realm of desire. Aschenbach's decision to stay in Venice indefinitely reflects his resolution not to return to his prior, disciplined self. He now neglects his work and lives partially in a fantasy-world of ancient, mythological visions that arouse his desire for beauty. His short vacation has now become a permanent transformation of his life. Aschenbach's gesture of "calm acceptance" is a kind of surrender: to the repressed parts of his personality now coming to the surface; to the intoxicating, seductive atmosphere of Venice; and to his desire for Tadzio, which is becoming more concrete and related to the boy himself, less abstract and related to art.

Aschenbach's interest in Tadzio has reached the point where he is not simply fascinated by the boy's beauty, but really desires him. He hopes that Tadzio returns his affections to some degree. Aschenbach continues to be infatuated with Tadzio's beauty, and continues to compare him to beautiful male characters from classical mythology. Yet as he admits to himself when he says, "I love you," his artistic admiration of Tadzio has turned into an actual erotic desire for the boy. In the final chapter of a tragedy, inevitability catches up with the protagonist. Von Aschenbach begins to be more honest with himself about his false Platonic ideal, and begins to pursue Tadzio as an idol. Moreover, he becomes the rouge-wearing older man in search of youth that he so despised on the boat trip to Venice, when he changes his appearance to please Tadzio. Aschenbach has entered a state out of which there is no escape; his initial unrestrained taste of passion has proven inescapable, his own personal pomegranate seed. In dressing up and wearing makeup, Aschenbach becomes the very image of the grotesque old man he saw on the boat in Chapter 3.

Mann uses von Aschenbach's journey to explore the consequences of unbridled desire and the imbalance between discipline and passion. As von Aschenbach indulges in his desires, he

undergoes physical and mental deterioration. His once-controlled world descends into chaos and disarray. The pursuit of pleasure and beauty leads him to neglect his responsibilities, compromise his values, and lose touch with reality. The novella suggests that a harmonious existence lies in the delicate balance between discipline and desire. It warns of the dangers of suppressing one's desires entirely, as they can resurface with overwhelming force and disrupt one's carefully constructed life. At the same time, it cautions against the complete abandonment of self-control, as it can lead to self-destruction and moral decay.

At the opening of the novella, Gustav von Aschenbach, while possessing a latent sensuality, exists as a man who has always held his passions in check, never allowing them expression either in his life or in his art. Like the turn-of-the-century bourgeois European culture he represents, Aschenbach is, in Freudian terms, "repressed"; a state of such imbalance that, it was believed could not long remain stable, nor could it produce truly inspired art. However, having kept his passions under such tight control for so long, once Aschenbach begins to let down his guard against them, they rise up in redoubled force and take over his life. Once Aschenbach admits sensual beauty into his life, represented by the boy Tadzio, all of his moral standards break down, and he becomes a slave to beauty, a slave to desire; he becomes debased. Thus, Aschenbach undergoes a total displacement from one extreme of art to the other, from the cerebral to the physical, from pure form to pure emotion. Thomas Mann's novella warns of the dangers--indeed, the deathly dangers--posed by either extreme. In *Death in Venice*, the conflict between discipline and desire serves as a metaphorical exploration of the human condition. It raises questions about the limitations of self-control, the pursuit of happiness, and the complex nature of desire. Through von Aschenbach's character, Mann emphasizes the need for a nuanced understanding of the interplay between these forces and the consequences that arise when this balance is disrupted.

UNIT 6 (B): APOLLONIAN VERSUS DIONYSIAN

Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* explores the conflict between the Apollonian and Dionysian elements through the protagonist, Gustav von Aschenbach, and his journey of self-discovery and obsession. The Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy, originally conceived by Friedrich Nietzsche, represents opposing forces in human nature: the Apollonian being associated with

reason, order, and restraint, while the Dionysian embodies instinct, passion, and ecstasy. In addition to Freud, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche also deeply influenced Mann. Nietzsche wrote about the genesis of Greek tragedy, arguing against the cliché of the ancient Greeks as statuesquely serene figures in an ideal Mediterranean landscape; rather, he believed that the classic tragedies had to be generated by a people that were not only highly civilized and cultured but also passionate; only in the balance of these forces could art arise. Nietzsche described the Greeks as maintaining a balance between two forces, the Dionysian, or those associated with the god Dionysus, and the Apollonian, or those associated with the god Apollo. While Dionysus was the god of fecund nature, spring, regeneration, wine and intoxication, and orgiastic extravagance, Apollo was the god of light, of form, that which shapes drives and instincts into clarity and order. While Dionysus was often associated with music – a passionate, engrossing art form – Apollo was associated with sculpture – a rigid art form. Nietzsche used this polarity to explain what he saw as being wrong with late 19th-century Germany: He believed that the Germans were too "Apollonian," too stiff, too restrained, and too cerebral to create truly great art. He predicted that the Dionysian forces would soon erupt if held in check too long and that the result could be devastating. Thus, Nietzsche used mythological terms to explain what Freud described in psychological terms. Mann attempts in his novella to effect a blend between the mythological and the psychological.

Gustav von Aschenbach, a disciplined and reserved writer, personifies the Apollonian element. He is a symbol of rationality and control, adhering strictly to societal norms and suppressing his desires. His pursuit of order and perfection is evident in his meticulous routines and his adherence to conventional art and literature. Aschenbach’s Apollonian (disciplined, stoic, rational) character is associated with a “European spirit” and the northern climate where he lives, in contrast to the Dionysian (pleasure-seeking) intoxication and pleasure of warmer, exotic destinations. When he talks about the marriage between his parents we find the presence of these opposing elements – the father’s side disciplined bureaucrats and the mother was the daughter of an orchestra conductor. He was the result of “the marriage of sober official conscientiousness with darker, more ardent impulses.” Aschenbach is the result of a marriage between contradictory personalities (which can be seen as Apollonian and Dionysian). This peculiar combination affects both his life and his writing. From his descriptions of his lifestyle and writing hours, we get to know that in contrast to more sporadically inspired artists, Aschenbach writes through regular, productive stints of work. Aschenbach epitomizes the

Apollonian artist—but how long can he continue to make art completely through rational discipline?

Aschenbach's initial visit to Venice is motivated by his need for a change of scenery and a return to order, seeking solace and artistic inspiration. However, Venice, with its sensuality, decay, and decadence, embodies the Dionysian element. The city represents a departure from Aschenbach's ordered world, plunging him into a realm of sensuous experiences and unbridled emotions. As he encounters the young Tadzio, a stunning adolescent boy, Aschenbach's repressed desires and longings emerge, blurring the boundaries between art and life, and reason and passion. Aschenbach used to be a very disciplined person and a very Apollonian artist. Now, however, devoted to Tadzio's beauty, he has become a leisurely, Dionysian character. As the narration suggests, Aschenbach is now largely caught up in a fantasy of ancient, mythological times, inspired by Tadzio and the sensuous atmosphere of Venice. His "vacation" has now turned into an indefinite, perhaps permanent journey, as he is overwhelmed by his latent desires. Aschenbach's intoxication from the climate mirrors how he is getting carried away by the intoxicating, Dionysian and repressed parts of his psyche. He becomes increasingly temporally disoriented, as he has a vision that transports him to ancient Greece. Like Aschenbach with Tadzio, Socrates uses abstract philosophy about beauty to justify his love for Phaedrus. The conflict between the Apollonian and Dionysian becomes apparent as Aschenbach grapples with his burgeoning infatuation for Tadzio. He tries to reconcile his disciplined nature with his newfound Dionysian desires, resulting in an internal struggle and inner turmoil. Aschenbach experiences an existential crisis, torn between the desire for artistic transcendence and the fear of indulging in forbidden passions. The Dionysian element challenges his carefully constructed identity and threatens to unleash his repressed desires, leading to his downfall.

Chapters One and Two demonstrate von Aschenbach's strong adherence to an Apollonian lifestyle. His day was a rigidly scheduled and ordered affair, and his artistic work was beginning to demonstrate this stiff lifestyle, as his prose grew overly structured and inflexible. However, von Aschenbach's dreams and his obsession with Tadzio, spliced into the writer's existence, demonstrate his tendency toward the Dionysian. The fourth chapter presents von Aschenbach's true internal struggle: he realizes that he is in love with the boy, but works to assimilate these feelings into his normal philosophy, which proves unsuccessful. Up to this point, von Aschenbach has struggled to repress his feelings for Tadzio, but his final interaction

with the boy demonstrates the triumph of the Dionysian forces in his mind. Finally, von Aschenbach verbally admits his love for Tadzio, although he mutters "I love you" alone, rather than in Tadzio's presence. The dream sequence definitively links Aschenbach's descent into passion with the worship of Dionysus. And whereas Aschenbach originally worshipped Tadzio, as a sort of Apollonian statuesque symbol of intellectual beauty and art, he is now the "god" that Aschenbach worships. This does not mean that Tadzio himself, as a character, is equated with Dionysus; Tadzio is Dionysian in the way he is feverishly, wantonly, and uncontrollably worshipped by Aschenbach. The shift from Apollonion to Dionysian is entirely the progression of Aschenbach. Tadzio himself remains a kid who likes playing on the beach.

Mann uses vivid imagery and symbolism to highlight this conflict. The descriptions of Venice's decay and the metaphorical representation of cholera serve as reminders of the transience and fragility of life. They symbolize the eruption of the Dionysian element and its destructive potential, contrasting sharply with the order and discipline represented by Aschenbach's Apollonian nature. Significantly, the cholera is Asian in origin: With the addition of this detail, the Indian jungle becomes a triply loaded motif. Psychologically, it is the locus of Aschenbach's repressed impulses; it was a jungle landscape that he envisioned when he first felt the whim to travel, to indulge in the joys of a warmer climate. Mythologically, India is said to be the birthplace of the cult of Dionysus. Now, at the scientific/empirical level, it is the place of origin for the disease that will kill Aschenbach. The final passages are extremely mythically imbued. The tussle between Tadzio and Jashu symbolizes the struggle of opposites that takes place throughout the novella; Tadzio is blonde while Jashu is dark-haired (see Chapter 3), Tadzio is delicate while Jashu is sturdy. Jashu has long held a subservient position to Tadzio, just as Aschenbach's instincts had previously been repressed by his conscious will, just as the Dionysian had been repressed by the Apollonian forces. The novella traces how those forces that are always kept down eventually rise up and break free; this has been the source of Aschenbach's tragedy. Standing out on the sandbar, having been almost suffocated by the suddenly violent and powerful Jashu, Tadzio appears as the messenger of death, beckoning Aschenbach toward the afterlife.

In *Death in Venice*, Mann does not present a clear winner in the conflict between the Apollonian and Dionysian. Aschenbach's pursuit of the Dionysian leads to his physical and spiritual deterioration, ultimately resulting in his death. However, there is a sense of liberation and transcendence in his demise, as he succumbs to his repressed desires and experiences a

brief moment of ecstasy. Mann's portrayal of the Apollonian and Dionysian conflict in *Death in Venice* is a critique of the limitations of strict rationality and the dangers of suppressing one's natural instincts. It highlights the complexity of human nature and the potential consequences of denying one's true desires. The novella serves as a cautionary tale, reminding us of the delicate balance between reason and passion, and the necessity of embracing the Dionysian within ourselves while maintaining a degree of Apollonian control.

UNIT 6 (C): ARTISTIC ADMIRATION/INSPIRATION VERSUS SEXUAL ATTRACTION

In Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, the polarity between artistic admiration and sexual attraction is a central theme that drives the internal conflict of the protagonist, Gustav von Aschenbach. The novella explores the tension and interplay between these two forces, ultimately leading to Aschenbach's downfall. Aschenbach, an esteemed writer, represents the Apollonian artist who seeks perfection and beauty in his work. He is initially captivated by the youthful beauty of the young Polish boy, Tadzio, whom he encounters in Venice. Aschenbach is entirely fascinated by the beautiful appearance of the boy. Aschenbach's initial attraction to Tadzio is rooted in his appreciative artistic sensibility, seeing the boy as an embodiment of classical beauty and an ideal subject for his creative endeavours. This admiration is characterized by a sense of aesthetic appreciation and a desire to capture Tadzio's beauty in his writing.

Aschenbach idealizes the boy as reminiscent of an ancient Greek statue. His interest in the Polish boy leads to abstract thoughts on beauty and art. But to what degree can his fascination with the boy's beauty remain abstract and separate from an actual desire for him? Aschenbach regards the boy as an artist who appreciates beauty. But the comparison of the boy to Eros (the Greek god of love) hints that there may be a growing element of desire to his obsession with the boy, as well. Aschenbach continually compares the boy to figures of classical antiquity. The beauty of Tadzio transports Aschenbach's mind to ancient times and makes him think of classical mythology. At this point, Aschenbach's interest in Tadzio is still very abstract, mixed up with his artistic "mythic ideas" of beauty.

Aschenbach's disciplined devotion to his work is beginning to slip as he becomes more and more in thrall to his interest in the boy and spends more and more of his time in leisure. Aschenbach becomes gradually less disciplined, losing focus on his work, in order to pursue Tadzio's beauty. He idealizes Tadzio as beauty itself and, currently, doesn't seem to desire the boy erotically. Aschenbach's gesture of "calm acceptance" is a kind of surrender: to the repressed parts of his personality now coming to the surface; to the intoxicating, seductive atmosphere of Venice; and to his desire for Tadzio, which is becoming more concrete and related to the boy himself, less abstract and related to art. Despite von Aschenbach's attempts to ennoble his love for Tadzio by putting it in the context of Greek philosophy, his reliance on the ideal of Platonic love is disingenuous. A prerequisite of the ideal relationship between a man and a boy is that the man be the boy's mentor. Von Aschenbach is unable to speak to Tadzio, much less become his mentor. The boy's attitude is also antithetical to the practice of Platonic love.

Aschenbach admires both Tadzio's beauty and his youth. Tadzio's beauty makes Aschenbach think of the beauty of art and writing. However, Aschenbach's artistic admiration of Tadzio's beauty is becoming excessive. Tadzio's beauty is at least in one way good for Aschenbach, as it inspires him to create beauty in his writing. Aschenbach's writing is once again importantly linked to his life experience, but in a way that his readers will never know. Aschenbach now enjoys his new intoxicated state of mind and does not wish to "sober up" by speaking to Tadzio and confronting him as a real person, rather than an ideal of beauty and youth. Aschenbach is increasingly powerless to resist his inner desires. Aschenbach's interest in Tadzio has reached the point where he is not simply fascinated by the boy's beauty but really desires him. He hopes that Tadzio returns his affections to some degree. Aschenbach continues to be infatuated with Tadzio's beauty and continues to compare him to beautiful male characters from classical mythology.

However, over time, Aschenbach's admiration for Tadzio evolves into a more visceral and sexual attraction, blurring the boundaries between art and desire. He admits to himself when he says, "I love you," his artistic admiration of Tadzio has turned into an actual erotic desire for the boy. In the final chapter of a tragedy, inevitability catches up with the protagonist. Von Aschenbach begins to be more honest with himself about his false Platonic ideal and begins to pursue Tadzio as an idol. Moreover, he becomes the rouge-wearing older man in search of youth that he so despised on the boat trip to Venice, when he changes his appearance to please

Tadzio. Aschenbach's artistic appreciation turns into an infatuation fueled by repressed desires and an awakening of his own repressed homosexuality. The shift from artistic admiration to sexual attraction signifies the conflict between the disciplined, controlled artist and the unleashed passions of the Dionysian element. Mann explores the tension between these two elements through Aschenbach's internal struggle. On one hand, he attempts to rationalize his infatuation as a source of artistic inspiration, seeking to capture Tadzio's beauty through his writing. On the other hand, he grapples with the forbidden nature of his desires, the fear of social judgment, and the moral implications of his attractions. The polarity between artistic admiration and sexual attraction creates a dichotomy within Aschenbach's psyche, fueling his inner turmoil and leading to a sense of moral and existential crisis.

Death in Venice is a story about the artist and the nature of art. At the opening of the novella, Gustav von Aschenbach, while possessing a latent sensuality, exists as a man who has always held his passions in check, never allowing them expression either in his life or in his art. Like the turn-of-the-century bourgeois European culture he represents, Aschenbach is, in Freudian terms, "repressed"; a state of such imbalance that, it was believed could not long remain stable, nor could it produce truly inspired art. However, having kept his passions under such tight control for so long, once Aschenbach begins to let down his guard against them, they rise up in redoubled force and take over his life. Once Aschenbach admits sensual beauty into his life, represented by the boy Tadzio, all of his moral standards break down, and he becomes a slave to beauty, a slave to desire. Thus, Aschenbach undergoes a total displacement from one extreme of art to the other, from the cerebral to the physical, from pure form to pure emotion. Thomas Mann's novella warns of the dangers – indeed, the deathly dangers – posed by either extreme.

The novella portrays the dangers inherent in the fusion of artistic admiration and sexual attraction. Aschenbach's pursuit of beauty and the Dionysian desires that underpin it ultimately leads to his physical and spiritual deterioration. His infatuation blinds him to the reality of Tadzio's indifference and the cholera epidemic that ravages Venice, ultimately leading to his tragic demise. Through the polarity of artistic admiration and sexual attraction, Mann raises questions about the nature of artistic inspiration and the boundaries between aesthetic appreciation and personal desire. He explores the complexities of human longing and the potential consequences of conflating artistic pursuits with unfulfilled desires. In *Death in Venice*, the polarity between artistic admiration and sexual attraction serves as a cautionary tale, reminding us of the precarious balance between creative expression and the dangers of

indulging in forbidden passions. It highlights the vulnerability of the artist and the potential consequences of blurring the lines between artistic appreciation and personal desire.

UNIT – 7

UNIT 7 (A): PLATONIC LOVE AND HOMOEROTICISM

Platonic love is a concept originating from the ancient Greek philosopher Plato. It refers to a deep and non-sexual form of love that is rooted in intellectual and emotional connection rather than physical desire. In Plato's philosophy, Platonic love is associated with the pursuit of wisdom and the appreciation of beauty in all its forms. Platonic love is characterized by a profound bond, admiration, and affection between two individuals. It transcends romantic or sexual attraction and is often marked by a strong intellectual and spiritual connection. Platonic love can exist between friends, mentors and mentees, or even in non-romantic relationships with a deep emotional bond.

Key elements of Platonic love include:

1. Intellectual Connection: Platonic love is founded on shared interests, values, and intellectual pursuits. It involves engaging in deep conversations, exchanging ideas, and appreciating each other's intellectual capacities.
2. Emotional Bond: Platonic love is marked by a deep emotional connection between individuals. It involves empathy, trust, and a sense of emotional support and understanding.
3. Non-Sexual: Unlike romantic or sexual love, Platonic love is devoid of physical desire or sexual attraction. It is a form of love that goes beyond the physical aspects of a relationship.
4. Mutual Respect: Platonic love is characterized by a deep sense of respect and admiration for the other person's qualities, virtues, and achievements. It involves recognizing and appreciating their individuality and unique characteristics.

Platonic love can be seen as a higher form of love, focused on the spiritual and intellectual aspects of human connection. It is often associated with selfless devotion and the pursuit of personal and mutual growth. Platonic love celebrates the beauty of the mind, soul, and character, emphasizing the importance of deep emotional connections and shared values. It is

important to note that the concept of Platonic love can vary in its interpretation and application, and its understanding may differ in different cultural and social contexts. Nonetheless, at its core, Platonic love embodies a deep and profound connection based on intellectual and emotional affinity rather than physical attraction or romantic involvement.

In *Death in Venice,* Thomas Mann explores the theme of Platonic love through the relationship between Gustav von Aschenbach, the protagonist, and Tadzio, the young Polish boy. Aschenbach's infatuation with Tadzio begins as a form of aesthetic appreciation and artistic admiration. At the beginning, it is unclear whether he is admiring the young boy's beauty as an appreciative artist or as a desirous voyeur. As a writer, Aschenbach values beauty and finds inspiration in Tadzio's youthful appearance, which he sees as an embodiment of ancient classical ideals. From the very beginning, Tadzio represents pure artistic beauty. At first, Aschenbach believes that he can admire this beauty dispassionately, from a purely intellectual, aesthetic standpoint. Later, he will try to convince himself that he desires the boy only as an inspiration for more of his principled, dignified writing. Aschenbach's love for Tadzio evolves throughout the novella, deepening into a profound emotional connection. He becomes increasingly captivated by Tadzio's presence, fixating on his every movement and feeling a sense of happiness and fulfillment simply by being in his vicinity. Aschenbach's affection for Tadzio transcends the physical and enters the realm of the spiritual and intellectual. But the comparison of the boy to Eros (the Greek god of love) hints that there may be a growing element of desire to his obsession with the boy, as well. Aschenbach continually compares the boy to figures of classical antiquity.

This initial admiration can be interpreted as a form of Platonic love, as it is rooted in the admiration of Tadzio's qualities rather than driven by sexual desire. Aschenbach becomes gradually less disciplined, losing focus on his work, in order to pursue Tadzio's beauty. Aschenbach's experience of Tadzio's beauty causes him to be newly aware of his own aged appearance. Von Aschenbach begins to be more honest with himself about his false Platonic ideal, and begins to pursue Tadzio as an idol. Moreover, he becomes the rouge-wearing older man in search of youth that he so despised on the boat trip to Venice, when he changes his appearance to please Tadzio. The heat of the sun matches the growing heat of Aschenbach's desire for Tadzio, which continues to grow. Aschenbach finds beauty in everything Tadzio does, including his speech, which Aschenbach can't even understand (and perhaps he likes it more for not being able to understand it, as that makes it more exotic). Aschenbach now enjoys

his new intoxicated state of mind and does not wish to “sober up” by speaking to Tadzio and confronting him as a real person, rather than an ideal of beauty and youth.

However, it is important to note that Aschenbach's love for Tadzio also contains elements of obsession and possessiveness, which complicate the nature of their relationship. Aschenbach is increasingly powerless to resist his inner desires. Aschenbach’s interest in Tadzio has reached the point where he is not simply fascinated by the boy’s beauty, but really desires him. He hopes that Tadzio returns his affections to some degree. Aschenbach continues to be infatuated with Tadzio’s beauty, and continues to compare him to beautiful male characters from classical mythology. By the end of the novella, Aschenbach will admit to himself that beauty and art, as represented by Tadzio, are corrupting: Tadzio will lead Aschenbach to abandon all morals and dignity, to surrender himself to decadent passion, as the gesture of "calm acceptance" here foretells. Finally, von Aschenbach verbally admits his love for Tadzio, although he mutters "I love you", his artistic admiration of Tadzio has turned into actual erotic desire for the boy. Aschenbach's longing for Tadzio becomes intertwined with his own desires and fantasies, blurring the line between Platonic and romantic love. His infatuation with Tadzio ultimately leads to his physical and moral deterioration, suggesting that the boundaries of Platonic love can be dangerous when crossed or misunderstood. The novella gradually delves into the complexities of Aschenbach's repressed homosexual desires and the awakening of his sexuality.

In order to more fully appreciate Mann's *Death in Venice*, the reader must understand the philosophical underpinnings of the text. Like Mann himself, von Aschenbach is a very well-read, well-educated man. The reader is privy to his thoughts, which often contain allusions to Ancient Greek philosophy the author is familiar with. As soon as von Aschenbach sees the boy, he begins to think of him in terms of a Greek ideal. The primary use of Greek philosophy in this text is von Aschenbach's effort to use Platonic philosophy to explain and justify his attraction to Tadzio, thus attempting to separate his feelings from pure lust. The specific text that von Aschenbach refers to is a dialogue (philosophical treatise) by Plato entitled *Phaedrus*. In the dialogue, Plato imagines Socrates and a beautiful boy named Phaedrus sitting under a tree discussing what the most ideal form of love. They conclude that love is necessary for mankind, and the most pure love can only exist between a man and a boy. This idealization of homoerotic love was common in Ancient Greek society. In fact, it was not until the Middle Ages that Christians began to romanticize male-female relationships. Most men carried on

heterosexual relationships and had families, but were also involved in less permanent homosexual relationships. The men were not defined as heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual at that time, because the full spectrum of sexuality was more normalized and accepted than it has been for most of modern history. One reason male-male relationships were idealized is that they held no practical reproductive purpose; thus the men could focus on true love rather than the practical matters of reproduction.

Mann's exploration of Platonic love in *Death in Venice* raises questions about the nature of love, the boundaries between admiration and desire, and the complexities of human emotions. The novella suggests that the pursuit of beauty and the idealization of another person can lead to both spiritual transcendence and personal destruction. Aschenbach's Platonic love for Tadzio represents a conflicted and flawed form of affection, highlighting the nuances and challenges of relationships that exist beyond physical desire. Overall, the theme of Platonic love in *Death in Venice* showcases the power and limitations of non-sexual connections, emphasizing the transformative potential and potential dangers inherent in such relationships.

Mann depicts the homoerotic undertones through vivid descriptions of Aschenbach's desires and fantasies. Aschenbach's gaze becomes increasingly fixated on Tadzio's physical attributes, such as his youthful beauty, grace, and sensuality. The descriptions emphasize Aschenbach's growing fascination and longing, hinting at a deep-seated homosexual desire. While the homoerotic elements are present throughout the novella, they remain largely unspoken and repressed. Aschenbach struggles to come to terms with his desires, attempting to rationalize and suppress them within the framework of his disciplined, Apollonian nature. The conflict between his homosexual desires and societal norms creates an internal struggle and a sense of moral dilemma.

The exploration of homoeroticism in *Death in Venice* raises themes of forbidden desire, self-discovery, and the tension between societal expectations and personal authenticity. It challenges the norms and conventions of the time period in which the story is set, as homosexuality was often stigmatized and condemned. Mann's depiction of homoeroticism in the novella is complex and multi-layered. It portrays the intricacies of human sexuality, the struggles of self-acceptance, and the potential consequences of repressed desires. Aschenbach's infatuation with Tadzio serves as a catalyst for his own personal and artistic transformation, ultimately leading to his tragic downfall. It is important to note that the portrayal of homoeroticism in *Death in Venice* has been subject to various interpretations and analyzes.

Different readers may have differing perspectives on the nature and significance of the homoerotic elements present in the novella.

UNIT 7 (B): MALE GAZE AND VOYEURISM

In *Death in Venice,* Thomas Mann explores the themes of the male gaze and voyeurism through the protagonist Gustav von Aschenbach's fascination with Tadzio and his observations of the young boy. In order to understand the theme, we need to delve into these two above-mentioned concepts.

Male gaze

The male gaze is a concept that originated in feminist film theory and has since been applied to various forms of media and cultural analysis. Coined by film theorist Laura Mulvey, the male gaze refers to the way in which visual media, such as films, advertisements, and literature, present the world from a heterosexual male perspective. It involves the objectification and sexualization of women or individuals of other genders, reducing them to objects of visual pleasure for the presumed male viewer. The male gaze typically portrays women as passive objects to be looked at, catering to the male viewer's desires and reinforcing traditional gender roles and power dynamics. It positions the male viewer as the active, controlling subject, while the women or other marginalized individuals become the passive, passive objects of the gaze.

The male gaze is characterized by several elements:

1. Objectification: The male gaze treats women or individuals of other genders as objects to be observed and consumed visually, often emphasizing their physical attributes and sexual appeal.
2. Power Dynamics: The male gaze reflects and reinforces existing power structures, with the male viewer exerting dominance and control over the objectified subjects.
3. Voyeurism: The male gaze positions the viewer as a voyeur, engaging in a visual act of looking without active participation or emotional connection to the subject.

4. Eroticization: The male gaze often sexualizes the bodies and appearances of women or other marginalized individuals, prioritizing their visual appeal over their personalities, thoughts, or agency.

The concept of the male gaze has been critiqued for its limited perspective and reinforcement of patriarchal norms. It tends to overlook or erase the diverse experiences and perspectives of women and other marginalized groups, reducing them to passive objects for the presumed male viewer's consumption. The male gaze is not limited to visual media but can also manifest in other cultural forms, such as literature, where descriptions and narratives may adopt a similar objectifying and sexualizing lens.

Feminist scholars and critics have sought to challenge and subvert the male gaze by creating alternative narratives, perspectives, and representations that disrupt the power dynamics and offer more inclusive, diverse, and authentic portrayals of women and marginalized individuals. It is important to note that not all visual media or representations conform strictly to the male gaze, and there is ongoing discussion and exploration of alternative gazes and perspectives that challenge and transcend traditional gendered ways of looking.

Voyeurism

Voyeurism is a term that refers to the act of obtaining sexual pleasure or satisfaction by secretly observing others without their consent. It involves the intense desire to watch or spy on others engaged in intimate or private activities, typically for personal gratification. Voyeurism is often associated with sexual arousal or stimulation derived from observing others in various situations. It is important to note that voyeurism is considered a paraphilic disorder when it becomes a persistent pattern of behaviour that causes distress or impairs one's daily functioning.

The act of voyeurism can take various forms, including peeping through windows, using hidden cameras or recording devices, or seeking out explicit material featuring non-consenting individuals. The pleasure derived from voyeurism often lies in the act of surreptitiously observing others without their knowledge or consent. Voyeurism is generally considered unethical and a violation of privacy rights, as it infringes upon the autonomy and dignity of the individuals being observed. It can have detrimental effects on the emotional well-being and privacy of those who are unknowingly subjected to voyeuristic behaviours.

Thomas Mann explores the concept of the male gaze through the protagonist Gustav von Aschenbach's perspective and his infatuation with Tadzio. Aschenbach's voyeuristic tendencies also become evident as he becomes increasingly fixated on observing Tadzio. Aschenbach's gaze is initially characterized by aesthetic appreciation as an artist. He sees Tadzio as an embodiment of beauty and grace, representing an ideal subject for his artistic endeavours. He takes pleasure in watching the boy's every movement, his physical appearance, and his interactions with others. However, as the narrative progresses, Aschenbach's gaze becomes increasingly fixated and sexualized, revealing the presence of the male gaze. Aschenbach's observations are fueled by a combination of aesthetic appreciation, desire, and curiosity, blurring the boundaries between his role as an artist and his personal desires. Mann depicts the male gaze and voyeurism through Aschenbach's surreptitious gaze and the vivid descriptions of his observations of Tadzio's physical attributes. Aschenbach's gaze lingers on Tadzio's youthful beauty, his slender figure, and his delicate features. Aschenbach's observations are tinged with a sense of secrecy and forbidden pleasure, as he watches Tadzio without direct interaction or acknowledgement. These descriptions emphasize Aschenbach's objectification of Tadzio and his reduction to a source of sexual desire.

The male gaze in *Death in Venice* highlights the power dynamics at play and the inherent voyeurism in Aschenbach's infatuation. Aschenbach assumes an active role as the observer, while Tadzio becomes the object of his gaze. This dynamic reflects the unequal power relationship between the older, established artist and the young, vulnerable boy. The exploration of the male gaze raises questions about the ethics of looking, the boundaries of desire, and the implications of objectifying others. Aschenbach's gaze serves as a means of projecting his desires onto Tadzio, blurring the line between art and personal obsession. It exposes the complexities of human desire and the potential consequences of objectification. It is important to note that the portrayal of the male gaze in *Death in Venice* does not endorse or condone its actions. Instead, it serves as a critical examination of the protagonist's flawed perspective and the consequences of his gaze. The novella invites readers to reflect on the power dynamics inherent in the act of looking and the need for self-awareness and empathy in our interactions with others. The exploration of the male gaze in *Death in Venice* contributes to the broader themes of desire, beauty, and the complexities of human relationships. It challenges readers to critically examine their own gaze and consider the implications of objectification and voyeurism in their interactions with the world.

The exploration of voyeurism in the novella raises also questions about the ethics of observation, the invasion of privacy, and the potential consequences of objectifying others. Aschenbach's voyeuristic gaze reflects his own desires and projections onto Tadzio, emphasizing the power dynamics at play and the potential harm in objectifying another person. Mann portrays voyeurism as a complex and flawed aspect of human nature. Aschenbach's voyeuristic tendencies symbolize his own inner desires, frustrations, and vulnerabilities. They serve as a catalyst for his personal and artistic transformation but also contribute to his eventual downfall. Through the exploration of voyeurism, *Death in Venice* critiques the dangers of unchecked observation and the potential moral and psychological consequences that can arise from objectifying others. It serves as a cautionary tale, reminding readers of the importance of self-reflection, ethical considerations, and the recognition of the boundaries between observation and intrusion. It is worth noting that the portrayal of voyeurism in *Death in Venice* does not endorse or celebrate the act but rather presents it as a flawed and complex aspect of Aschenbach's character. The novella invites readers to reflect on their own behaviours and motivations, encouraging a critical examination of the ethical implications of observation and the power dynamics inherent in the act of watching others.

UNIT 7 (C): DISEASE, DECAY, AND DEATH

The theme of disease and decay in *Death in Venice* is prevalent throughout the novella and serves as a metaphor for the internal and external disintegration of characters and society. It reflects the physical, moral, and psychological decline that occurs as a result of repressed desires, social conventions, and the passage of time. Moreover, the theme of death permeates the entire novella, exploring various aspects of mortality, the fear of death, and its relationship to beauty, desire, and artistic creation. Death serves as a central motif and catalyst for the protagonist's journey and self-realization. Thomas Mann was an economical and oblique writer. He does not waste a word: every detail he includes is significant, and every detail serves his strategy of suggesting, and hinting, rather than directly telling. Seemingly marginal particulars, such as a stormy sky, the stonemasons' yards selling blank gravestones, the black colour of the gondola, or the long, exposed teeth of a grimacing figure, reminiscent of a skull, are all instrumental in establishing an atmosphere of foreboding and death. The reader need not

wait for the end of the story to make the link between sensual art and death; Mann forges the link gradually through a variety of motifs working in concert.

From its opening sentences, *Death in Venice* establishes an ominous tone. The descriptions of the dire political situation, the storm, and the menacing-looking stranger (his red hair suggesting the devil) foretell impending dangers. Specifically, the gravestones and mortuary introduce thoughts of death. Also note that Mann's parallel presentation of his main character and the current political circumstances establishes what will become a symbolic link between the two: The declining Aschenbach will come to stand for a civilization blinded to its inner decay and on the brink of inevitable war. One of the main ways death is portrayed in the novella is through the presence of decay and the transient nature of beauty. Firstly, the physical aspect of disease and decay is evident in the descriptions of Venice itself. The city is depicted as a decaying and crumbling environment, with dilapidated buildings, murky canals, and the presence of death in the form of funeral processions and cemeteries. This physical decay mirrors the internal decay of the characters, particularly the protagonist Gustav von Aschenbach. The unexpectedly grecoloury sky creates a dismal atmosphere. Aschenbach's pursuit of beauty, represented by his infatuation with the young boy Tadzio, leads to his own moral and physical deterioration. The contrast between beauty and decay highlights the fleeting nature of life and the inevitability of death.

The leitmotif of several sinister strangers signifying decay, degeneracy and death appears many times in the novella with different representations of ominous men appearing in closer and closer proximity to von Aschenbach. First, there is the old foreigner in the Munich graveyard through whom the fear of death is explored. At the beginning of the story, Aschenbach is portrayed as a disciplined and austere artist who suppresses his desires and emotions. His encounter with the old man in the cemetery and his subsequent infatuation with Tadzio disrupts his carefully constructed façade, forcing him to confront his own mortality and the limitations of his self-imposed discipline. Aschenbach's fear of death is intertwined with his fear of losing his artistic inspiration and creative power.

Next is the figure of the frightening gondolier in Venice who steers a boat that reminds von Aschenbach of a coffin. The man in the cemetery and the gondolier share many of the same characteristics, including a distinctive hat, reddish hair, and prominent teeth. The most ominous section of this chapter is when von Achenbach is unable to control his gondolier. He immediately notes that the gondola feels like a coffin, an allusion to death, and then cannot

control where his gondolier takes him. The journey in the gondola suggests the voyage to the Underworld taken by many classical heroes, such as Odysseus, Theseus, and Hercules: These heroes entered the realm of the dead by crossing the River Styx at the hands of the skeletal boatman Charon. His statement "You will pay" is exceedingly ominous as it reminds the payment to Charon necessary for ferrying the souls into the underworld.

The old man in the boat who is wearing makeup shows an extreme perversion of an obsession with youth which has decayed with time. Aschenbach looks down upon this man who has given up all self-control and dignity, but the man can be seen as a version of Aschenbach's own repressed desire for youth, which will overtake him later. Aschenbach continues to view the old man with disgust, but he will later come to resemble him, as he becomes more and more controlled by his own long-repressed desires. The old man continues to represent a pathetic version of decayed physical features. The final embodiment of the sinister stranger is represented through the appearance of the street singer who performs at von Aschenbach's hotel garden. He is reminiscent of the stranger in the graveyard and the gondolier. The singer again has similar characteristics to the other two symbolic men, including red hair and a specific hat, and he pays special attention to von Aschenbach. This death's head or Grim Reaper figure has become increasingly ominous throughout the chapters, as he moves physically closer to von Aschenbach and is available for more extensive conversation. The street singer is accompanied by the smell of carbolic acid, a germicide that foreshadows von Aschenbach's death.

Furthermore, the theme of death is explored through the presence of cholera in Venice. Cholera, as a deadly disease, symbolizes the lurking presence of death within the city and the fragility of life. The outbreak of cholera heightens the atmosphere of impending doom and emphasizes the contrast between the pursuit of beauty and the reality of mortality. The representation of Venice, which has been uneasy throughout the novella, takes a decided turn for the more sordid gradually. Von Aschenbach describes it as a labyrinth, the presence of the water making it a mysterious and somewhat sick place. Of course, the city is literally sickened by the onset of the cholera epidemic and von Aschenbach's earlier description of it as a "tourist trap" rings true. If the Venetian authorities were honest about the medical state of the city, quarantine would be imposed and von Aschenbach would not be able to leave anyway. Ultimately, Venice traps von Aschenbach.

The British travel agent's realistic description of the spread of the disease pins down the vague sense that fate is out to get von Aschenbach. The description of the Ganges Delta resonates

exactly with von Aschenbach's original dream in Chapter One of a dense and dangerous jungle. He is destined not only to die in Venice, but to die of this exotic, tropical disease. By reading backwards, this original dream finally takes its proper significance. The spreading sickness in Venice, while important to the story's plot, is also symbolic of the sickness of passion overtaking Aschenbach. The fact that the Italians deny the severity of the health hazard augments Mann's portrayal of Venice as a place of artifice, deceit, and corruption. The scene in which Aschenbach loses his way in the city streets is representative of the state of his soul; the garbage and overgrown weeds symbolize decay. The strawberries are also symbolic; although Aschenbach has heard the warnings not to eat fruits or vegetables, as they may be infected, he gives into his overwhelming thirst and indulges anyway. Thus, the berries are the "forbidden fruit," like the taboo love for Tadzio in which Aschenbach indulges in order to satisfy a "thirst" but against his better judgment.

The pomegranate juice that Aschenbach sips during the performance is symbolic: its red colour, the standard colour of passion, links it to the strawberries Aschenbach eats upon first seeing Tadzio and to the possibly infected strawberries he will eat closer to his death; so, too, are the recurring devil-like figures characterized by red hair (the musician here is one of these), and when Aschenbach dresses up for Tadzio at the end of the novella, he will wear a red tie. Red comes to symbolize not only passion but also depravity. Standing out on the sandbar, having been almost suffocated by the suddenly violent and powerful Jashu, Tadzio appears as the messenger of death, beckoning Aschenbach toward the afterlife.

It is significant that the cholera is Asian in origin: With the addition of this detail, the Indian jungle becomes a triply loaded motif. Psychologically, it is the locus of Aschenbach's repressed impulses; it was a jungle landscape that he envisioned when he first felt the whim to travel, to indulge in the joys of a warmer climate. Mythologically, India is said to be the birthplace of the cult of Dionysus. Now, at the scientific/empirical level, it is the place of origin for the disease that will kill Aschenbach.

The theme of disease and decay also explores the conflict between the artistic pursuit of beauty and the inherent risks associated with it. Aschenbach, as a writer, is driven by his quest for artistic perfection, but this pursuit leads him down a path of self-destruction. The desire for beauty becomes tainted with decay, illustrating the inherent dangers and consequences of the artistic endeavour. In summary, the theme of disease and decay in *Death in Venice* encompasses physical, moral, and psychological decay. It serves as a metaphor for the internal

and external disintegration of characters and society, highlighting the consequences of repressed desires, the passage of time, and the pursuit of beauty. Through the exploration of death, disease and decay, the novella delves into the fragility of human existence and the transient nature of beauty.

UNIT – 8

UNIT 8 (A): ANALYSIS OF THE MAJOR SYMBOLS

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i. The Stranger in the Cemetery

In *Death in Venice*, there is a significant scene involving a stranger in the cemetery. This encounter plays a crucial role in the development of the protagonist, Gustav von Aschenbach, and serves as a pivotal moment in the narrative. In the novella, Aschenbach visits the cemetery on a rainy day and encounters a mysterious stranger. The stranger, who is described as having "dark hair and pallid, almost bloodless face," exudes an air of decadence and decay. Aschenbach is both repulsed and fascinated by the stranger, feeling a sense of recognition and unease in his presence. The stranger in the cemetery is highly important, both in sparking von Aschenbach's interest in travel and in hinting at the protagonist's homoerotic and voyeuristic tendencies. In observing the tourist, von Aschenbach is not necessarily attracted to the man, but rather wishes to personify the mysterious stranger by undertaking his own travels.

The encounter with the stranger symbolizes a confrontation with the darker aspects of Aschenbach's own psyche. The stranger represents a metaphorical embodiment of Aschenbach's repressed desires, passions, and mortality. He serves as a reflection of the suppressed impulses and the hidden depths of Aschenbach's own being. The stranger's appearance in the cemetery suggests a confrontation with death and the inevitability of human mortality. Aschenbach, who has been obsessed with order, control, and discipline, is forced to confront the fleeting nature of life and the erosive power of time. The encounter also introduces a sense of decay and corruption into the narrative. The stranger's presence represents a disruption of the ordered and controlled world that Aschenbach has sought to maintain. It exposes the vulnerabilities and weaknesses within Aschenbach's carefully constructed facade, leading to a gradual unravelling of his own identity and self-control. Furthermore, the stranger in the cemetery serves as a catalyst for Aschenbach's descent into a state of obsession and self-

destruction. After the encounter, Aschenbach becomes increasingly fixated on Tadzio, the young Polish boy he encounters in Venice, which ultimately leads to his downfall.

The stranger in the cemetery is a symbolic figure that embodies the themes of mortality, desire, and the shadowy aspects of the human psyche. Through this encounter, Mann explores the inner turmoil and conflict within Aschenbach, as well as the fragility and vulnerability of human existence. The old man is also an embodiment of the ageing process and mortality, serving as a memento mori, a reminder of the inevitability of death. The old man's symbolism is multifaceted. He represents the passage of time and the decay of the physical body. Aschenbach's infatuation with Tadzio is a manifestation of his longing for youth, beauty, and vitality. The old man serves as a contrast to Tadzio's youth, emphasizing the fleeting nature of beauty and the inevitable decline of the body. Overall, the stranger in the cemetery scene serves as a pivotal moment that propels the narrative forward and sets in motion the series of events that lead to Aschenbach's tragic fate.

ii. The Gondolier

In *Death in Venice*, the gondolier in Venice, at the beginning of the journey, represents the sensuality and allure of Venice itself. Venice is depicted as a city of decadence and pleasure, enticing visitors with its beauty, art, and sensual atmosphere. The gondolier, with his graceful movements and association with the waterways, embodies this sensuality and becomes a symbol of temptation for the protagonist, Gustav von Aschenbach. But gradually the ambience changes and the Gondolier becomes a symbol of death, just like the man in the cemetery.

The most ominous scene happens when von Aschenbach is unable to control his gondolier. He immediately notes that the gondola feels like a coffin, an allusion to death, and then he cannot control where his gondolier takes him. This encounter subtly echoes his encounter with the stranger in the Munich graveyard, another clear symbol of death. The gondolier and the graveyard stranger are strikingly similar, as they both have red hair and prominent teeth: the graveyard stranger bares his teeth in a strange grimace, and the gondolier shows his teeth with the effort of rowing. In addition, both men have specific hats. The stranger's is made of bast, and the gondolier's is a, "shapeless straw hat beginning to unravel." The unravelling hat perhaps symbolizes the onset of chaos in von Aschenbach's otherwise highly ascetic existence. Clearly, the graveyard stranger and the gondolier are highly similar, a repetition that illustrates destiny, not coincidence, has brought von Aschenbach to Venice.

As Aschenbach arrives in Venice, he almost immediately finds himself not in control, just as he will later not be able to control his own unconscious desires. The strange gondolier recalls Charon, who ferried souls into the underworld in Greek mythology. The gondolier navigates the waterways, transporting people to various destinations, and becomes a metaphorical ferryman or guide to the realm of death. Venice is thus already associated with a strange timelessness and otherworldly quality, as well as with death.

iii. The Old Man in the Boat

In *Death in Venice*, the old man wearing makeup in the boat symbolizes the duality of beauty and decay, the blurring of gender boundaries, and the acceptance of one's own desires and mortality. The old man shows an extreme perversion of an obsession with youth. The rouge, face powder, and lipstick – represent the vain and deceitful side of art, art intended to conceal the truth and seduce others. The old man represents a departure from traditional gender norms and expectations. By wearing makeup, he challenges conventional notions of masculinity and femininity, blurring the boundaries between the two. His appearance in the boat captures Gustav von Aschenbach's attention. The old man's makeup can be seen as a metaphorical mask, concealing his true self and emphasizing the transient and artificial nature of beauty. It reflects the themes of artifice and illusion prevalent throughout the novella.

Furthermore, the old man serves as a mirror for Aschenbach's own internal struggles and desires. Aschenbach, repressed and disciplined, is captivated by the old man's unconventional appearance and the freedom it represents. The old man's willingness to embrace his desires contrasts with Aschenbach's own suppression of his desires, leading him to question his own life choices and repressed longings. Aschenbach looks down on this man who has given up all self-control and dignity, but the man can be seen as a version of Aschenbach’s own repressed desire for youth, which will overtake him later. Aschenbach continues to view the old man with disgust, but he will later come to resemble him, as he becomes more and more controlled by his own long-repressed desires. The old man continues to represent a pathetic version of old age. In dressing up and wearing makeup, Aschenbach becomes the very image of the grotesque old man he saw on the boat in Chapter 3. In the final chapter of a tragedy, inevitability catches up with the protagonist. Von Aschenbach begins to be more honest with himself about his false Platonic ideal, and begins to pursue Tadzio as an idol. Moreover, he becomes the rouge-wearing older man in search of youth that he so despised on the boat trip to Venice, when he changes his appearance to please Tadzio.

UNIT 8 (B): MYTHICAL/CLASSICAL LITERATURE REFERENCES

In *Death in Venice*, Thomas Mann incorporates mythical elements and references to classical literature to enhance the depth and symbolism of the narrative. These allusions add layers of meaning and connect the novella to broader cultural and literary traditions. The Byzantine architecture with its Greek lettering introduces the motif of the classical world, which will pervade the novella. Mann is famous for his economical writing: It is important to realize that there is hardly a wasted word in his text; details such as these are almost always deliberate and significant.

The most significant mythical elements present in the story can be found associated with the figure of Tadzio, the young boy who captures Gustav von Aschenbach's attention. Tadzio is represented in terms of the stereotypical traits associated with Classical Greek conceptions of human physical beauty. He is compared with the bronze sculpture known as the "Spinario," or the "Boy with Thorn." This sculpture is one of the few large-scale bronzes from the Classical period that has survived. It is of Roman origin (from the 1st century BC) based on a Greek original. During the Renaissance, it became a model for artists who sought to render the beauty of the human body. He is, as it were, Classical beauty incarnate, and it is as much this *ideal* of beauty, as the boy Tadzio himself, with which Aschenbach becomes enthralled.

Tadzio can be seen as a modern incarnation of the mythological figure of Tammuz or Adonis, representing youth, beauty, and vitality. This connection evokes the classical theme of the older artist's infatuation with a young, idealized figure. Adonis was a handsome youth in Greek mythology, desired by both Aphrodite and Persephone. Tadzio's beauty and allure parallel the concept of idealized youth and become a source of infatuation for Aschenbach. Aschenbach regards the boy as an artist who appreciates beauty. But the comparison of the boy to Eros (the Greek god of love) hints that there may be a growing element of desire to his obsession with the boy, as well. Aschenbach continually compares the boy to figures of classical antiquity.

The fourth chapter is riddled with references to Ancient Greece. As soon as von Aschenbach sets eyes on Tadzio, he associates him with, "Greek statuary of the noblest period." He begins to describe the boy as "beauty itself" and "form as the thought of God." The meaningful smile that he gives von Aschenbach is described as "the smile of Narcissus." Narcissus is a mythic

character from Greek Mythology, whose great beauty attracted the nymph Echo; when Narcissus cruelly rejected her, she died from grief, leaving behind only her voice. To punish Narcissus, the gods made him fall in love with his own reflection in a pool, and he pined away on the shore. Then he died and was reborn as a flower. Significantly, the myth holds that the boy refused all offers of love. Thus, the consummation of von Aschenbach's love seems highly unlikely. Thus, the allusion to Narcissus again hints at an ill-fated love, this time more harmful to the lover than the beloved: will Aschenbach die of his love for Tadzio and, like Echo, leave behind only his writings, his voice?

The Greek Myth of Hyacinth is the central mythology of the text. Hyacinthus was a handsome Spartan youth loved simultaneously by Apollo, the god of the sun, and Zephyrus, the god of the west wind. Apollo was so entranced by Hyacinth and his love for him that he abandoned all his duties: he stopped attending to the oracle in Delphi, of which he was in charge; he stopped playing his zither; he ceased to keep his weapon, the bow, at the ready. Out of jealousy, Zephyr picked up Apollo's discus, threw it at Hyacinth, and killed him. The Hyacinth flower is said to have grown up out of the blood of this youth. Aschenbach assumes the role of Apollo in this myth as he abandons his "duties" and succumbs to his rapture for Tadzio. The comparison between Tadzio and Hyacinthus hints that Aschenbach’s love for Tadzio may be ill-fated and harmful.

The pomegranate also has mythical significance: in Greek myth, Persephone is abducted by the god of the Underworld. While in the underworld she unthinkingly eats a seed of a pomegranate, which is known as the food of the dead, and which binds her to spend at least half the year in Hades. Aschenbach's journey to Venice could also be seen as a journey to the Underworld (see commentary for Chapter 3). In a simple scene, through the use of myth and recurring motifs, Mann builds up a symbolic moment of layered significance, a moment that captures the major themes of his novella.

The tension between the Dionysian and Apollonian aspects of human nature, as explored by Friedrich Nietzsche, is also symbolically present in the novella. Dionysus represents the primal, passionate, and irrational forces of life, while Apollo symbolizes rationality, order, and restraint. Aschenbach's disciplined and controlled existence aligns with the Apollonian, while his infatuation with Tadzio represents a desire to embrace the Dionysian.

Aschenbach paraphrases Plato's text *Phaedrus*; the characters of Plato's dialogue are paralleled with Aschenbach and Tadzio. With his vision, Aschenbach legitimizes the views he is coming to adopt by putting them in the mouth of the great philosopher. However, Socrates here is also portrayed as "sly," as taking advantage of the naive Phaedrus; thus, the comparison also points to the vice behind Aschenbach's intentions. Perhaps Aschenbach does initially believe that his interest in the boy is purely chaste and that Tadzio will serve simply as an inspiration for his elevated philosophizing; however, his shame indicates his ultimate understanding of the immorality of the interest.

Classical literature references also enrich the novella. For instance, Aschenbach's initial encounter with the stranger on the boat, who tells him about a city plagued by pestilence, mirrors the narrative structure of the ancient Greek tragedy "Oedipus Rex" by Sophocles. The stranger's role parallels that of the messenger who brings disastrous news to the protagonist, foreshadowing Aschenbach's tragic fate. The Goat-bearded man on the ship looked like satyr, the attendant to god Dionysus. The journey in the gondola suggests the voyage to the Underworld taken by many classical heroes, such as Odysseus, Theseus, and Hercules. These heroes entered the realm of the dead by crossing the River Styx at the hands of the skeletal boatman Charon. The episode is only one of a multitude of references to Greek myth, and, as with many of these references, it functions as parody: while the classical heroes' crossings were proof of their strength and determination, Aschenbach's crossing is marked by a weak surrender. The strange gondolier recalls Charon, who ferried souls into the underworld in Greek mythology. Strange red-haired figures consistently reappear to Aschenbach, suggesting demons or devils. All of these mythological references serve to universalize the characters and their experiences in the story.

Aschenbach has been compared to St. Sebastian, a Christian martyr who allows his body to be tortured in the service of "spirit". St. Sebastian lived during the time of the persecution of the Christians, and although he himself was a Christian, he joined the Roman military. He advanced to the rank of Captain, and this allowed him to help protect the very Christians he was supposed to guard. When the Roman Emperor Diocletian discovered Sebastian's treason, he had him shot with arrows. Aschenbach, we might speculate, is a similar "soldier" whose martyrdom is a kind of sacrifice for art (rather than for Christianity). Parallel to Sebastian: both are outwardly soldiers who keep an inner secret, a secret related to "erotic" instincts in the larger sense. Both are punished when their secret is made known. Moreover, the motif of the

pursuit of beauty and its connection to the concept of Eros (the Greek god of love and desire) is interwoven throughout the narrative. Aschenbach's longing for beauty and his fixation on Tadzio mirror the themes found in ancient Greek mythology, where mortal individuals were often drawn to the captivating beauty of gods or god-like figures.

The allusion to these figures helps to evoke a general mythical atmosphere to imply the story's larger, mythical proportions, and it also communicates the characters' universality. The presence of mythical elements and classical literature references in *Death in Venice* underscores the timeless and universal nature of the story's themes. It connects the narrative to a broader cultural and intellectual heritage, infusing it with a rich historical and symbolic context. Through these allusions, Mann adds depth, complexity, and a sense of continuity to the exploration of beauty, desire, and mortality within the novella. These allusions deepen the exploration of themes such as the tension between Apollonian restraint and Dionysian passion, the pursuit of beauty, and the conflict between reason and desire.

UNIT 8 (C): MANN'S CONCEPTION OF ART AND ARTIST

Death in Venice is a story about the concept of the creation or nature of art and the role of the artist. Mann delves into the complexities of artistic inspiration, the pursuit of beauty, and the artist's relationship with his work. This analysis aims to examine Mann's portrayal of the creation of art and the artist in *Death in Venice* and explore the themes and ideas it presents. Mann presents the artist's struggle as a central theme in the novel, with Aschenbach embodying the archetype of the tormented artist. At the opening of the novella, Gustav von Aschenbach, while possessing a latent sensuality, exists as a man who has always held his passions in check, never allowing them expression either in his life or in his art. Like the turn-of-the-century bourgeois European culture he represents, Aschenbach is, in Freudian terms, "repressed"; a state of such imbalance that, it was believed, could not long remain stable, nor could it produce truly inspired art. However, having kept his passions under such tight control for so long, once Aschenbach begins to let down his guard against them, they rise up in redoubled force and take over his life. Once Aschenbach admits sensual beauty into his life, represented by the boy Tadzio, all of his moral standards break down, and he becomes a slave to beauty, a slave to desire; he becomes debased. Thus, Aschenbach undergoes a total displacement from one

extreme of art to the other, from the cerebral to the physical, from pure form to pure emotion. Thomas Mann's novella warns of the dangers posed by either extreme.

Aschenbach experiences a creative stagnation, feeling trapped in the confines of his disciplined and rational approach to writing. His encounter with the young Tadzio serves as a catalyst, awakening his dormant artistic impulses and exposing him to a new source of inspiration. Through Aschenbach's journey, Mann explores the artist's internal conflict between reason and passion, discipline and indulgence. Aschenbach's pursuit of beauty and desire for artistic fulfillment leads him to a state of inner turmoil and self-destruction. This depiction underscores the notion that the creative process can be fraught with tension and the artist's quest for perfection can have profound personal consequences.

Mann emphasizes the transformative power of beauty and its impact on the artist's creative process. Aschenbach's infatuation with Tadzio becomes a source of inspiration, fueling his artistic imagination and rejuvenating his work. The young boy represents an ideal of beauty that transcends ordinary existence and inspires Aschenbach to reach for higher artistic ideals. Mann also explores the dichotomy between the artist's intellectual pursuit and the sensual, aesthetic experience. Aschenbach's rationality is challenged by his growing infatuation, blurring the boundaries between intellectual inspiration and erotic desire. This suggests that artistic creation can arise from a fusion of intellectual and sensual experiences, challenging traditional notions of artistic inspiration.

Additionally, Mann depicts the cost of artistic expression – sacrifices and risks involved in the pursuit of art. Aschenbach's artistic journey leads him to the brink of self-destruction, as he surrenders himself to his passions and disregards societal norms. Mann suggests that true artistic expression requires a willingness to confront one's own desires and to embrace the inherent risks and consequences. He highlights the fleeting nature of artistic inspiration and the transient nature of beauty. Aschenbach's obsession with Tadzio and his pursuit of the perfect moment of artistic inspiration ultimately leads to his downfall. This exploration of the transience and impermanence of artistic creation adds a poignant layer to Mann's portrayal of the artist's struggle.

Death in Venice shows that there is a close connection between artists' lived experience and his artistic creation. As the narrator explains, for example, the heroism of many of Aschenbach's characters has a close connection to his own disciplined self-restraint. His

writing takes a real toll on his own body, as his wearied face shows. Aschenbach's readers only see his finished products, and don't realize the links between his writing and his life, as with Aschenbach's well-received essay that he writes while in Venice. The beauty of its writing is owed to his fascination with Tadzio's physical beauty and form. The public's ignorance of the circumstances of Aschenbach's writing, the narrator suggests, is a good thing: the inspiration of Aschenbach's writing in his desire for Tadzio would mar the final product. Unlike his readers, though, Aschenbach cannot separate his writing from his life. He often blurs the distinctions between life and art, as when he imagines himself into the Platonic dialogue Phaedrus as Socrates, or when he sees Tadzio as a work of art. Mann's novella thus explores how the categories of life and art, truth and fiction, cannot be kept separate for the artist. The autobiographical resonances of the story (Mann actually vacationed in Venice with his wife once, where he became fascinated by a young Polish boy) further blur these distinctions between art and the artist.

In addition, Mann examines more generally the artistic temperament through his representation of Aschenbach. In this, he was heavily influenced by the ideas of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche about the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Inspired by the Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus, Nietzsche saw these categories as the two essential tendencies of art. The Apollonian is associated with rationality, order, and harmony, whereas the Dionysian is associated with intoxication, ecstasy, and revelry. Aschenbach begins the story as an extremely Apollonian character, who practices writing with discipline and self-restraint, and never indulges much in pleasure. By the end of the story, however, he becomes excessively Dionysian and is consumed by passion, emphasized in his intense dream of a wild, orgiastic crowd (which is reminiscent of scenes of ancient worshippers of Dionysus). Rather than attaining a healthy balance between the Apollonian and Dionysian, Aschenbach tries too hard to suppress his Dionysian side, with the result that it eventually overcomes him entirely, leading to his death. In exploring these contradictory sides of Aschenbach's personality, Mann presents Nietzsche's duality as governing not only art, but the artist, as well.

To conclude, Thomas Mann's depiction of the creation of art and the artist in *Death in Venice* offers a complex exploration of the artist's struggle, the transformative power of beauty, and the sacrifices involved in the pursuit of art. Through Gustav von Aschenbach's journey, Mann delves into the artist's internal conflicts, the fusion of reason and passion, and the transient nature of artistic inspiration. *Death in Venice* serves as a poignant meditation on the nature of

artistic creation, capturing the complexities and challenges faced by the artist in his pursuit of truth, beauty, and self-expression.

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SUGGESTED READING

1. Ellis Shookman – Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*: A Novella and Its Critics
2. Gilbert Adlair – The Real Tadzio: Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and the Boy Who Inspired It.
3. T. J. Reed – *Death in Venice*: Making and Unmaking a Master
4. Boria Sax – Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*
5. Rachel Nolan and Adam Kissel – *Death in Venice* Study Guides

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Critically assess the character of Aschenbach and his gradual transformation which ultimately brings about his downfall and death.
2. Trace a few of the motifs in the story (the colour red, the strange unnamed figures Aschenbach encounters, death references, mythical references, or one of your own discovery) and explain how they work together to build toward a larger idea or theme.
3. What do you know of the concept of 'Platonic Love'? Does von Aschenbach's relationship with Tadzio live up to the Platonic ideal?
4. What do you understand about Yoyeurism? Trace the elements of Aschenbach's voyeuristic gaze and its implication in the novella.
5. What is the significance of the city of Venice as the setting of the novella?
6. How would you evaluate Mann's description of the climate and citizens of Venice as represented in the novella?
7. Examine the changing descriptions of Venice as von Aschenbach moves from excitement at being there to feeling oppressed by the city. To what extent do the narrator's descriptions rely on the protagonist's feelings?
8. What are the major polarities present in the narrative? Briefly explain.
9. Analyze the conflict between Apollonian and Dionysian elements in Aschenbach's character and trace his journey from the former to the latter.

10. What is Mann's philosophy about art and artist? How has it been employed in the thematic structure of *Death in Venice*?
11. Explore the theme of death and disease in the novella and its symbolic interpretation.
12. Write a note about some of the major symbols and motifs in the novella.
13. *Death in Venice* is replete with mythical allusions and references to many classical texts. Analyze in detail a few of those references and their significance.

BLOCK III

UNITS: 9-12

EUROPEAN POETRY

CONTENT STRUCTURE:

UNIT – 9

UNIT 9 (A): CHARLES BAUDELAIRE – LIFE AND WORKS

Charles-Pierre Baudelaire was born in Paris on 9 April 1821, the son of Francois Baudelaire, a former priest who had left the Church to work for the State, and of his wife Caroline Archenbaut Defayis, his junior by thirty-four years. The dominant fact of the poet's youth was his father's death in February 1827. It had at least a double consequence for his son: it lifted or lowered the barrier which any child must experience in his desire for independence and increased his possessiveness of his mother. As he wrote to her more than thirty years later:

> In my childhood I went through a stage when I loved you passionately. Listen and read without fear. I've never told you anything about it. I remember an outing in a coach. You'd just come out of a clinic you'd been sent to, and to prove that you'd given some

> thought to your son, you showed me some pencil sketches you'd done for me. Can you believe what a tremendous memory I have? Later, the square of Saint-Andre-des-Arts and Neuilly. Long walks, ´ constant acts of tenderness. I remember the quays which were so melancholy at evening. Oh, for me that was the good age of maternal tenderness. I beg your pardon for describing as 'a good age' one that for you was doubtless a bad one. But I lived constantly through you, you were mine alone.

There can be no doubt about the intensity with which Charles relished that period which is recalled in the beautiful untitled poem number xcic, as another letter confirms (C i 445). All the more grievous must have been for him the 'treason' he felt eighteen months later when his mother elected to remarry (she wed lieutenant-colonel Jacques Aupick, a career soldier who died a general in 1857). The effects of this Hamlet-like situation are far-reaching. Charles' eighteen months alone with his mother had probably intensified both his fantasy that she belonged exclusively to him and the feeling of guilt which must have inevitably accompanied this oedipal transgression. The rage with which he discovered the truth about her real inclinations, and which he still felt in later years long after the break-up with his stepfather which was so incisive as to force him to meet his mother in such places as the rose Salon of the Louvre, testifies to the blow her second wedding dealt to his self-image. We can reconstruct the importance of this reaction through at least two decisive episodes of his later life. Having gone through the classical education of a future holder of the Baccalaureat, first in ´ Lyon and then at the college Louis-le-Grand in Paris, Baudelaire embarked ` on the carefree life of contemporary Boheme` , mingling with fellow young poets, artists and prostitutes, thereby also contracting a venereal disease from which he never properly recovered. During his twentieth year, his stepfather convinced the family council.

Thus in June 1840, Charles boarded the Paquebot-des-Mers-du Sud bound for Calcutta but which he disembarked from at Saint-Denis de la Reunion. The seven-month trip left lasting memories. These can be perceived in the persistent exotic images which animate his poems, especially those written with his later mistress Jeanne Duval in mind. In spite of his assertion that he had 'pocketed wisdom' on his return on coming of age in April 1842, he claimed his paternal inheritance and, within the next eighteen months managed to dissipate 44,500 of the 100,000 francs-or he had received. At his stepfather's suggestion, his mother initiated a legal procedure to halt her son's profligacy, ending in the imposition of a conseil judiciaire which prevented him from having direct access to the money he had inherited from his father, forcing him to go through the intermediary of a lawyer. From 21 September 1844 and for the rest of

his life, Charles only received the returns of the invested remains of his inheritance, as overseen by Narcisse-Desir ´ e Ancelle, a notary of Neuilly. ´ Baudelaire's enduring fury at this imposition is very revealing. Not only did he persistently complain that the conseil marked the beginning of his financial downfall (although in truth it probably saved him from the worst), but the very reasoning he later used against its usefulness shows how self-deluding he remained. Baudelaire's main argument against the conseil was that, had he been left to dissipate his inheritance completely, he would then have had no other choice than to start an (economically) sound life (as if he could not have done that anyway). Clearly, his intolerance regarding the imposition of the *conseil judiciaire* stems from the fact that it repeated and renewed the frustration experienced by the fact of having a stepfather imposed upon him at the very time he believed to have his mother to himself. Baudelaire's reluctance to accept any other authority than that of his mother doubtless has its root in this stark contrast between the indulgence of an elderly father and the military discipline his stepfather attempted to enforce.

Following the decree of the *conseil judiciaire* (1844), Baudelaire's day-to-day life became a financial quagmire. The mechanism of this situation, which can be followed in his correspondence, is a very simple one. Unable to match his needs to his revenue, Baudelaire kept borrowing money from publishers, magazine directors, friends or, more frequently, his mother. The borrowed amount corresponded to the sum he believed his current writing would secure him when published. What happened nine times out of ten was either that the projected publication was delayed, or brought in a lower than expected fee, or that in the meantime, he had incurred new debts. This led to new borrowing meant both for his sustenance and to allow him to repay the previous loans. The need to provide for Jeanne obviously complicated the matter further (all the more so since we can surmise that she had little education in household economy), as did the fact that the art-lover in Baudelaire periodically found it very difficult to resist purchasing paintings or etchings offered to him by several art-dealers he happened to know. So dire were the financial straits he found himself in at times that he could write to Mme Aupick: moreover, I have grown so accustomed to physical suffering, I know so well how to adjust two shirts under a torn pair of trousers that the wind cuts through; I am so skilful at fitting straw or even paper soles into shoes gaping with holes, that it's really almost only moral suffering that causes me pain. – Yet, I have to confess that I have reached the point where I dare not make any more abrupt movements or even walk too much for fear of tearing myself even more. He had often to change lodgings because he had not paid the rent or to disappear

from a place to which his creditors might track him down – Baudelaire had more than seventy addresses after leaving his parents' home.

He often took refuge in cheap hotels, but this increased the cost of his day-to-day expenses. All this bore heavily on his creative activity, as he rightly pointed out to his mother in innumerable letters. Why, then didn't he change his lifestyle? The question is all the more natural as – at least after 1857, the date of General Aupick's death – he very clearly saw a way out: to leave Paris and join his mother in Honfleur, a small Normandy seaport to which she had retired. Indeed, the few weeks he spent there testify to the incredible creativity he could foster while living a sedate life. Even if one takes into account the reasons he invokes to himself or to Mme Aupick – the need to be in Paris to secure talks and contracts with his potential publishers – there is little doubt that the reasons for continuing such a stressful existence are to be found not on any conscious level, but on an unconscious one. Both in money matters and in the careless way he treated his venereal disease, Baudelaire was probably punishing himself. It may seem far-fetched at first to surmise an oedipal origin to be at the basis of one's dealings with one's fortune or with one's health, but guilt seems the only plausible reason for such an irrational way of living. This feeling of guilt probably stems, as we have seen, from the disappearance of his father at a time when boys do harbour such death wishes against their genitor. The fact that its effect on Charles remained so powerful all his life bears witness both to the intensity with which he experienced that episode and to the relation between his literary vein and his darker sides.

Published in June 1857, *Les Fleurs du Mal* was condemned in August for its 'delit d'outrage ´ a la ` morale publique' (offence against public morals), and its author was fined 300 francs and ordered to suppress six poems from the collection. Although this condemnation is evidence of the narrow-mindedness of the cultural policy that dominated the Second Empire (the reign of Napoleon III from 1852 to 1871) – Flaubert's Madame Bovary had just escaped a similar condemnation earlier that year – there is yet reason to wonder both at the way it was prepared and at Baudelaire's reaction. As we have seen, one of Baudelaire's fundamental intuitions concerns the destructiveness he experienced first in himself. This experience – of which sadism is only one of several extreme forms – explains at least in part why he so unremittingly adhered to the doctrine of original sin, which he stubbornly opposed to all the ideologies of Progress that were flowering in his time: sin was the term which theologians used for the destructive streak he felt only too well in himself. Thus if sin – or, as he would have preferred to say, Evil – is the basic fact of human life, it follows that if one is to continue being

a Christian, it can only be in the severe form of Augustinian or even Jansenist Catholicism (it is perhaps not by chance that the most understanding contemporary reaction to Les Fleurs du Mal, that of Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, came precisely from a similarly orientated mind). At the same time, Christianity was the official religion of the society, which Baudelaire abhorred. Hence, he could neither be a Christian nor not be one (inasmuch as he shared its central belief). Baudelaire's solution was Satanism. Satanism was, for him, the inevitable but logical way to maintain both his creed and hope for salvation. By imploring Satan – as he does, for instance, in 'Les Litanies de Satan' – he was trying to short-circuit the all too comfortable beliefs of all the hypocrites lectures he expected and, at the same time to reaffirm the need for redemption he felt that the traditional figure of Christ could not provide because it was too compromised by contemporary society. One can only guess if this theological radicalism had a political counterpart.

In much the same way as his dandyism, Baudelaire's Satanism was a mask. This, in turns, helps explain some of the dominant traits of his personality: the more repulsive he tried to show himself, the more he was protecting a moral integrity which he felt normal behaviour only too often corrupted. Hence also his incredulity at the indictment of his book. Far from being immoral, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in his mind, was on the contrary of the highest morality precisely because of its subversion of conventional – and thus hypocritical – morals. As he complained several years later to Ancelle, his long-time nemesis whom he had nevertheless come to respect:

> Must I tell you, you who failed to guess it just as much as the others, that in that atrocious book I placed all my heart, all my tenderness, all my religion (disguised), all my hatred? It is true that I will write the opposite, that I will swear on all the gods that this is a book of pure art, of pretence, of hypocrisy. And I'll lie like a puller of teeth.

With Baudelaire, travesty comes close to being a (religious) art. There were, however, also other reasons for his fury at the censorship of his poems. By making him suppress six of them, the law court was acting in the way a moralising parent would. Thus it was repeating in its way what the *conseil judiciaire* had done: setting him back in the position of someone under-age. Such tutelage was unbearable. It was in his eyes the confusion of conventional and artistic morality, it was a way of preventing him from setting his own (very high) standards, thus reimposing on him the brutal reality of the law when his father's premature death had induced him to believe his works depended on his decisions alone. Baudelaire's life was wholly

dedicated to writing: this is why there is so little to report about it. His days were his works. Neither his literary connections – with Gautier, Flaubert, Sainte-Beuve, Asselineau, Poulet-Malassis, his publisher – nor his artistic friendships – with Delacroix, Daumier, Meryon, Constantin Guys, Nadar or Manet – seem to have meant more than occasional moments of mutual understanding. Even Poe, whom he never met, or Wagner, whom he did, the objects of his greatest admiration, seem to have been chiefly pretexts for his writing. If Baudelaire was the first of what Verlaine was later to call the poetes maudits `, it was because he strove to coincide entirely with his literary creation at a time when society showed very little respect for poetry. The price he paid for this effort (the financial misery) was, in his eyes, a sufficient reason for wanting to be judged solely by his writing. His sacrifice, so to speak, was in itself proof of an irreproachable stance. Being at odds with French justice thus represented a fatal blow. Not only did it cause him prejudice, but it also split his writings between those that he was allowed to publish in France and those that had to be relegated to Belgium, where Poulet-Malassis published the forbidden poems under the title Les Epaves (wreckage).

Belgium was, however, to seal the poet's fate in an unexpected way. Ever more in financial trouble and vainly looking for a French publisher willing to buy his complete works, he decided to travel to Brussels in April 1864. Having agreed to give some talks, he was also hoping to find a publisher generous enough to relieve his plight. Alas, the disappointment with France's neighbour was to be immense. His lectures met with very little success and brought him only negligible returns. The two publishers he was hoping to attract, though formally invited, did not even turn up and later refused to deal with him. Baudelaire's bitterness soon turned to fury. Somewhat paradoxically he decided to remain in Belgium – though he had practically no means of living there – and to write two scathingly fierce pamphlets against the country: Amoenitates Belgicae and Pauvre Belgique!, both published posthumously. In March 1866, while visiting the Saint-Loup church in Namur, he suffered a cerebral stroke which soon left him hemiplegic and unable to speak. A few months later, he was taken back to Paris, placed in Dr Duval's nursing home near L'Etoile, and lodged in a room decorated with a painting of Manet and a copy of a Goya. There, both Mrs Manet and Mrs Paul Meurice tried to comfort him somewhat by playing some Wagner on the piano for him. He died there on 31 August 1867 and was buried in the cimetiere Montparnasse, ` where he lies next to his mother and his stepfather. Baudelaire's life was a frequently unhappy one. Although he had mainly himself to blame for this unhappiness, what must be understood is that it gave him certain insights into the fate of his Parisian contemporaries shared by no other writer of his time, with the possible

exception of Flaubert. The paradox here is that it is Baudelaire's very narcissism which led him to such insights. As can be seen in so many of his poems, his mode of relating to the figures he stages is mainly one of identification. Even where the language he uses seems to indicate otherwise – as for instance in the celebrated opening line of 'Le Cygne': 'Andromaque, je pense a vous' (Andromache, I think of ` you) – his understanding of the fate of Hector's widow is based on the fact that he shares her feeling of deprivation. These figures are mainly victims, social victims: drunkards, old ladies, ragmen, prostitutes, beggars, maids, street cleaners, even thieves – they all testify to the dominantly proletarian composition of the French metropolis:

Aurora, trembling in her gown of rose and green,

Made her way slowly on the still-deserted Seine.

Old Paris rubbed his eyes, woke to the day again,

And gathered up his toils, that honest working man. (FM 211)

The paradox of this predominantly proletarian world, with which his poems tend to identify ever more strongly, is that at the same time, Baudelaire thinks of himself as an aristocrat. Andromaque is a case in point: the former Trojan princess, whom he depicts after the Virgilian narrative of the Aeneid Book iii, has become 'vile property' ['vil betail'] under Pyrrhus's arrogant rule before ´ being given away to one of Hector's enslaved brothers. If, as Sartre has suggested, it was a reflex of Baudelaire's and Flaubert's generation to identify with the nobility of the preceding aristocratic class (so as to sever mental links with the stifling materialism of the Second Empire's bourgeoisie), it remains to his credit to have represented this fictive aristocracy in the degraded state of a downcast proletariat, thus laying bare the insensitivity and cruelty of emerging industrial capitalism.

UNIT 9 (B): BAUDELAIRE AND HIS POETICS

Baudelaire is a man apart in French literature. Intensely individual, he can be assigned to the ranks of no single school. He has certain affinities with the Romantic poets, and like the Parnassians his doctrine was "l'art pour Tart" As in the Parnassians, the life of the times finds in him small reflection and artistic expression. But whereas the leaders of the school withdrew to remoter regions in time or space, Baudelaire's withdrawal is within himself, for exploration

and exploitation of his own ego. Personally, all the manifestations of the day, Political, social, and intellectual, he scorns. He has a horror of philanthropy and humanitarianism, and after 1848 the very idea of progress is grotesque to him, as it is a sure sign of decadence, or as he says : "une lanterne qui jette des t?n?bres sur tous les objets de la connaissance." And so, like Leconte de Lisle, he hates steam and electricity in that these will never be fit for poetic represen tation. Thoroughly in sympathy with the disinterestedness that distinguished the Romanticists of 1830, he later regrets to be living in an age preeminently utilitarian after "le Coucher du Soleil romantique." With all the younger poets of his time, he bitterly denounces "la critique et l'art bourgeois," the former especially represented by all the leading academic reviews of the day. Outward activity in any form he intentionally avoids as a source of later regrets. Man, in his opinion, should take examples from the owls, the personification of stillness, the birds dear to Minerva.

In 1847 Baudelaire discovered the work of Edgar Allan Poe. Overwhelmed by what he saw as the almost preternatural similarities between the American writer's thought and temperament and his own, he embarked upon the task of translation which was to provide him with his most regular occupation and income for the rest of his life. His translation of Poe's *Mesmeric Revelation* appeared as early as July 1848, and thereafter translations appeared regularly in reviews before being collected in book form in *Histoires extraordinaires* (1856; "Extraordinary Tales") and *Nouvelles Histoires extraordinaires* (1857; "New Extraordinary Tales"), each preceded by an important critical introduction by Baudelaire. These were followed by *Les Aventures d'Arthur Gordon Pym* (1857), *Eurêka* (1864), and *Histoires grotesques et sérieuses* (1865; "Grotesque and Serious Tales"). As translations these works are, at their best, classics of French prose, and Poe's example gave Baudelaire greater confidence in his own aesthetic theories and ideals of poetry. Baudelaire also began studying the work of the conservative theorist Joseph de Maistre, who, together with Poe, impelled his thought in an increasingly antinaturalist and antihumanist direction. From the mid-1850s Baudelaire would regard himself as a Roman Catholic, though his obsession with original sin and the Devil remained unaccompanied by faith in God's forgiveness and love, and his Christology was impoverished to the point of nonexistence.

Between 1852 and 1854 Baudelaire addressed a number of poems to Apollonie Sabatier, celebrating her, despite her reputation as a high-class courtesan, as his madonna and muse, and in 1854 he had a brief liaison with the actress Marie Daubrun. In the meantime

Baudelaire's growing reputation as Poe's translator and as an art critic at last enabled him to publish some of his poems. In June 1855 the *Revue des deux mondes* published a sequence of 18 of his poems under the general title of *Les Fleurs du mal*. The poems, which Baudelaire had chosen for their original style and startling themes, brought him notoriety. The following year Baudelaire signed a contract with the publisher Poulet-Malassis for a full-length poetry collection to appear with that title. When the first edition of *Les Fleurs du mal* was published in June 1857, 13 of its 100 poems were immediately arraigned for offences to religion or public morality. After a one-day trial on August 20, 1857, six of the poems were ordered to be removed from the book on the grounds of obscenity, with Baudelaire incurring a fine of 300 (later reduced to 50) francs. The six poems were first republished in Belgium in 1866 in the collection *Les Épaves* ("Wreckage"), and the official ban on them would not be revoked until 1949. Owing largely to these circumstances, *Les Fleurs du mal* became a byword for depravity, morbidity, and obscenity, and the legend of Baudelaire as the doomed dissident and pornographic poet was born.

The failure of *Les Fleurs du mal*, from which he had expected so much, was a bitter blow to Baudelaire, and the remaining years of his life were darkened by a growing sense of failure, disillusionment, and despair. Shortly after his book's condemnation, he had a brief and apparently botched physical liaison with Apollonie Sabatier, followed, in late 1859, by an equally brief and unhappy reunion with Marie Daubrun. Although Baudelaire wrote some of his finest works in these years, few were published in book form. After publishing his earliest experiments in prose poetry, he set about preparing a second edition of *Les Fleurs du mal*. In 1859, while living with his mother at Honfleur on the Seine River estuary, where she had retired after Aupick's death in 1857, Baudelaire produced in rapid succession a series of poetic masterpieces beginning with "Le Voyage" in January and culminating in what is widely regarded as his greatest single poem, "Le Cygne" ("The Swan"), in December. At the same time, he composed two of his most provocative essays in art criticism, the "Salon de 1859" and "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" ("The Painter of Modern Life"). The latter essay, inspired by the draftsman Constantin Guys, is widely viewed as a prophetic statement of the main elements of the Impressionist vision and style a decade before the actual emergence of that school. The year 1860 saw the publication of *Les Paradis artificiels*, Baudelaire's translation of sections of the English essayist Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* accompanied by his own searching analysis and condemnation of drugs. In February 1861 a second, and greatly enlarged and improved, edition of *Les Fleurs du mal* was published

by Poulet-Malassis. Concurrently Baudelaire published important critical essays on Théophile Gautier (1859), Richard Wagner (1861), Victor Hugo and other contemporary poets (1862), and Delacroix (1863), all of which would be collected after his death in *L'Art romantique* (1869). The tantalizing autobiographical fragments entitled *Fusées* ("Rockets") and *Mon coeur mis à nu* ("My Heart Laid Bare") also date from the 1850s and early '60s.

Baudelaire makes the Realist manner of seeing and of writing appear strange, by inserting fragments of lived reality in a supernatural text based on dreams or experiences and he modernises the practice of the Romantic reverie through the preciseness with which facts from the bourgeois world are summoned and deployed. Characteristic of this method of composition is the value that the analysis of the (bourgeois) reader and more particularly the reading public has in his poems. Baudelaire does not limit himself to addressing the reader, at the beginning of his collection of poems, in order to win the reader's favour, but draws an allegorically distanced and excessive picture of the reader that simultaneously presents a characteristic of the bourgeois soul, as he puts it in the Salon de 1859. The introductory poem of the Fleurs du Mal is a typical example of Baudelaire's completely new approach to the reader: an examination of the reader's conscience, a confession, self-analysis or self-accusation of a collective, a confession that the reader is tricked. forced to undertake against his will.

In 1861 Baudelaire made an ill-advised and unsuccessful attempt to gain election to the French Academy. In 1862 Poulet-Malassis was declared bankrupt; Baudelaire was involved in his publisher's failure, and his financial difficulties became desperate. By this time he was in a critical state both physically and psychologically, and feeling what he chillingly called "the wind of the wing of imbecility" pass over him. Abandoning verse poetry as his medium, Baudelaire now concentrated on writing prose poems, a sequence of 20 of which was published in *La Presse* in 1862. In April 1864 he left Paris for Brussels in the hope of persuading a Belgian publisher to publish his complete works. He would remain in Belgium, increasingly embittered and impoverished, until the summer of 1866, when, following a collapse in the Church of Saint-Loup at Namur, he was stricken with paralysis and aphasia from which he would never recover. Baudelaire died at age 46 in the Paris nursing home in which he had been confined for the last year of his life. At the time of Baudelaire's death, many of his writings were unpublished and those that had been published were out of print. This was soon to change, however. The future leaders of the Symbolist movement who attended his funeral

were already describing themselves as his followers, and by the 20th century he was widely recognized as one of the greatest French poets of the 19th century.

Baudelaire recognized himself in Delacroix, just as he was later to recognize himself in Poe. It is a fundamental aspect of his poetic universe that the opposites of heaven and hell, God and Satan, ideal and spleen, 'extase de la vie' and 'horreur de la vie', elevation and fall, are not irremediably disjoined, but collapse and telescope into each other. In this respect La Madeleine dans le désert presents a dramatic parallel with his own poetry, which repeatedly illustrates how a spiritual elevation or aspiration towards the infinite can be diverted and misdirected downwards into the physical and sensation. In 'Femmes damnées' the lesbian lovers are said to be 'De la réalité grands esprits contempteurs, / Chercheuses d'infini, dévotes et satyres', seeking a transcendence in a love which goes counter to the order of nature. But it is in Le Poème du hachisch that Baudelaire explicitly states that the human thirst for the infinite is 'un goût qui se trompe souvent de route'. Crime, the intoxication of the artist, or the drunken stupor of the down-and-out of the faubourg are all manifestations, not of a lack of spirituality, but rather of one which, impatient and frustrated, seeks to grasp eternal life within the here and now, within the temporal and in sensation. Romanticism, and nowhere more acutely than in Baudelaire, is impatient of the distance that separates human beings from the world, from other people, and within themselves, a distance which the rationalist accepts as a fundamental and unalterable condition of conscious life. The Romantic, on the contrary, sees it as tragic separation, and an incitement towards the restoration of a unity lost. His inability to accept this condition causes him to sell his soul, or lose it in impossible aspirations: 'tout homme qui n'accepte pas les conditions de la vie, vend son âme'.18 Behind Baudelaire's sadism and violent love poems, one senses, as in Constant's Adolphe, the veiled but unmistakable presence of the myth of the androgyne and the transcendent unity it implies.

It was because of a similar confusion of love, death, and religion that in his essay on Madame Bovary Baudelaire was able to recognize himself in Flaubert's 'bizarre Pasiphaé', pursuing the ideal 'à travers les bastringues et les estaminets de la préfecture' (p.). In a brilliantly provocative argument he elevates Emma to great heights and identifies her with 'le poète hystérique' . Her bovarysme lies not just in her belief that the ideal can be made real in certain privileged times or places, but also in her confusion of love, sensuality, and religion, no more more tellingly illustrated than in the death scene, when 'collant ses lèvres sur le corps de l'Homme-Dieu, elle y déposa de toute sa force expirante le plus grand baiser d'amour qu'elle

eût jamais donné'.19 The grotesqueness of the gesture should not be allowed to conceal the intensity of her quest for some absolute value or experience, which has taken the wrong path and been misdirected into the senses of which she remains prisoner to the end. Her confusion stems from an inchoate and semi-conscious exasperation at the imperfections of a world in which action and dream are irrevocably disjoined, and in which the 'aspiration vers l'infini' is constantly frustrated. The novelist and the poet celebrate a yearning that can have no outlet except in art; less lucid, but equally torn, Emma is duped by the illusion of the immanence of the ideal in reality.

A related work to La Madeleine dans le désert is La Madeleine avec un ange, which Baudelaire does not mention and probably did not know, since, as Johnson says, it 'must have been little known to Delacroix's contemporaries and was scarcely commented on in his lifetime'. It shows Mary Magdalene kneeling in some kind of grotto, her upper body thrust back, her hands tightly clenched in prayer, her head lifted upwards with an anguished expression, attended by an angel, with on the right of the picture a much wider opening, allowing some light from the upper air to pass into the scene. It is a powerful image of repentance,and indeed of carnality, but much more readable, and to that extent more conventional, than its mysterious and fragmentary counterpart. Although entirely different in manner and subject matter, La Mort de Sardanapale is thematically linked to La Madeleine dans le désert, and it also finds a striking parallel in Baudelaire's own mental universe. Again, it is surprising that he should say so little about this extraordinary work, which represented what was most typical and Romantic in Delacroix's production. Baudelaire had placed it among a series of paintings—-Dante et Virgile, Le Massacre de Scio, Le Christ aux Oliviers, Saint Sébastien, Médée, Les Naufragés, Hamlet—which give the viewer the impression of witnessing 'la celébration de quelque mystère douloureux' and in his piece on the Exposition Martinet of his enthusiasm is unmitigated by the changes that had affected Delacroix's work over almost thirty years: 'Le Sardanapale revu, c'est la jeunesse retrouvée' (p.). It was probably Byron's tragedy Sardanapalus of that drew Delacroix's attention to the subject, though the two works are very dissimilar in conception. By his use of soliloquy at crucial points in the play, by his reporting of off-stage action, and above all in preserving a strict adherence to the unities of time, place, and action, Byron intended his play to be in the neoclassical mode of the French, of Alfieri and Grillparzer.

UNIT 9 (C): "THE IDEAL" – A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The main themes of the poem L'Idéal (The Ideal) are beauty and artistic idealism – this poem is a critique of the beauty of artistic ideal. It explores the idea of unrealistic beauty standards and how they affect Baudelaire. He is struggling to find the beautiful woman that art portrays because reality is not like fiction. In relation to 'Salon de 1859', as Hadlock (1999) states, 'Baudelaire's frequent recourse to the "Nature as dictionary" formula also suggests certain compatibility between Nature and art'. He further states that Baudelaire argues the concepts of the Ideal and the Nature are mutually exclusive (118). As the poem L'Idéal implies, the ideal in art is very separate from reality, nature, and results in unrealistic expectations and the 'real need of my heart, profound as an abyss' – longing for the ideal. We can also observe the contrast in the lines 7-8: 'For I cannot find among those pale roses / A flower that is like my red ideal'. The red rose in this poem is a symbolism for a woman with unrealistic beauty standards that art, the ideal, has set for him, whereas the white rose symbolises the women that are natural and real. Because art has set unrealistic beauty standards for Baudelaire, he lusts for the ideal woman and is unhappy with real natural woman. In this poem, Baudelaire refers to the 'Night, daughter of Michelangelo', which is a statue – the ideal here is defined by an unrealistic object, an object that was created by someone's ideal. He also talks about Lady Macbeth, which is a fictional character from Shakespeare's tragedy, also created by someone and not based on reality.

In relation to the Victorian era, it was ideal for a woman to wear corsets, to eliminate a desirable shape. There the western ideal of golden hair, as Gitter (1984) states, it had become an obsession in the Victorian era. 'In painting and literature, as well as in their popular culture, they discovered in the image of women's hair a variety of rich and complex meanings, ascribing to it powers both magical and symbolic' (936). People from this era took the ideal from art, paintings and literature, and understood the unrealistic nature of it by viewing golden hair as magical. They took these unrealistic beauty standards that they read about or saw in paintings, and applied them to realistic beauty standards.

The poem L'Idéal mirrors the Victorian era due to its idealism and lack of setting realistic beauty standards. It is mocking the cliché of romantic beauty and is still relevant now with

plastic surgery. People lust for the unobtainable, they want what they can't have due to social media setting unrealistic beauty standards with filters and photo manipulation.

The second poem that I will be focusing on is the poem La Beauté. This poem contains the same amount of stanzas as the poem L'Idéal, as well as the same amount of lines as previously described poem. The poem La Beauté (Beauty) has the main themes of beauty and the reality of it. This poem is written from a woman's point of view as she tries to find the reality of beauty. The woman in this poem mocks the idea of finding beauty in the external an is happy that poets are focusing on her stature, as she acknowledges that it is taken from old statues, and indicates that people still have certain beauty standards that do not change. She is happy because the poets will spend the future wondering about the beauty of nature. 'Poets, before my grandiose poses, / Which I seem to assume from the proudest statues, / Will consume their lives in austere study' (lines 9-11).

In this poem, Baudelaire mocks the poets that are looking for beauty in the external. According to Heck (1981), D. J. Mossop insists that Baudelaire is describing 'the aspect of beauty as absolute, as opposed to Beauty as relative; being absolute' (85). In the final stanza of this poem, Baudelaire realises the true origin of beauty. 'For I have, to enchant those submissive lovers, /Pure mirrors that make all things more beautiful: / My eyes, my large, wide eyes of eternal brightness!' (lines 12-14). These lines show a powerful image of eyes being compared to mirrors. Baudelaire realises that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. Person's or object's worth is dependent on the eyes that are watching them. As Heck (1981) states, 'The beauty of external objects must then coincide with one's internal conviction and feeling'. He further states in relation to La Beauté, 'the purity is no longer in the person of the goddess, but it is now merely a physical quality of the eyes', (92) implying that the view of beauty depends on the observer.

With the poem La Beauté, Baudelaire focuses on Platonic idealism and mocks the poets that only look for beauty in the superficial. Poets from the Elizabethan era have portrayed beauty externally, for example focusing on women and nature as Baudelaire implies that he himself can find beauty in many different things. He implies that unlike other poets, Baudelaire doesn't focus on the superficial with this poem and this description beauty is unique as well. He even calls other poets submissive and easily influenced by the standards of beauty in poems – 'I have to enchant those submissive lovers' (line 12).

The poems L'Idéal and La Beauté have a lot in common. Both of these poems focus on beauty, the idealised perception of it and the superficiality. Both poems focus on the topic of unrealistic standards of beauty, which are taken from the artistic creations of others. What is interesting here is the portrayal of statues. In L'Idéal, Baudelaire refers to Michelangelo's statue as being one of his ideal beauty standards. He dreams of his perfect woman to look like a statue. In La Beauté, Baudelaire writes from a woman's point of view. The woman in this poem poses for poets, taken an inspiration from classical statues and hopes that it will make the poets confront their unrealistic views of beauty by confronting them with the old.

The poem La Beauté comes before the poem L'Idéal and it is as if these poems tell one story, in which L'Idéal should come before La Beauté. In L'Idéal, Baudelaire focuses on his impossible ideals of beauty. He names fictional women as an example of what he's looking for and wonders why natural women don't look like the one he fantasizes about. On the other hand, in the poem La Beauté, Baudelaire writes from a different point of view – the point of view of a woman, in which the woman is beautiful and criticizes the non-realistic standards of beauty. She poses as an old statue in non-natural poses as she's trying to mimic it and tries to confront the poets with the nature of beauty. She's trying to make the poets see the truth. It is as if Baudelaire is one of those poets based on the poem L'Idéal. He himself is viewing beauty superficially. He does this to possibly confront his own perception of beauty and in La Beauté he realises the truth by writing from a point of view of a beautiful woman. According to Miller (1993), Mossop argues that Baudelaire's La Beauté represents 'absolute beauty' and L'Idéal represents 'relative beauty' (322).

In conclusion, Baudelaire mocks the idealistic standards of beauty and how they are based on non-realistic standards. This causes people to go under plastic surgery to fit into those standards that are not even based on reality.

UNIT 9 (D): "LA BEATRICE" – A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Baudelaire does a fantastic job with his poetry, which he uses to make people think and confront their unrealistic views of beauty. Beatrice “and the mocking women of the *Vita nuova*. However, he adds, “the fact remains that there is no clear-cut reference to the *Vita nuova*." We think, on the other hand, that it is possible to demonstrate a genuine allusion to Dante's work in Baudelaire's poem. For reasons of versification we furthermore suggest that “La Beatrice” is, in origin at least, a rather early poem of Baudelaire's and quite possibly contemporary with the Salon de 1846 in which he quotes from the Commedia." La Beatrice " is conceived in that visionary mode of poetry which derives from the prophets and which Dante so elaborated. A symbolic spot, a place of vision remote from real places, is evoked at the beginning of the poem as at the beginning of the *Commedia*. The ironic reference to Musset, Lamartine, and Hugo's elegies prepares us for the satanic inversion Baudelaire will make of Dante's vision: we should already note that his Beatrice will appear, not in a rain of flowers, but in an infernal landscape, a wasteland. Another convention of the visionary mode of poetry is that the vision suddenly surprises the poet when he is in a state of distraction. The ascending movement of Dante's cloud of angels is perverted into Baudelaire's descending cloud of demons. To “gridavan " and " Osanna " are opposed " chuchoter " and " rire," the latter being essentially satanic in Baudelaire's thought. Another parallel with the *Vita nuova* also suggests itself, if we recall how readily Baudelaire identified women. The word “caricature " suggests the perverted mode of the whole poem, in which traditional poetic material is made to produce unfamiliar resonances. ssant!") Two further allusions to Dante can also be found, and they both depend upon the fact that in Baudelaire's poem as in Dante's, the speaker is by admission a poet. It is perhaps not too exaggerated to see in the eagles of the antepenultimate line a recollection of Dante's characteristic iconography. Eagles are rare in Baudelaire's otherwise rather complete bestiary, yet Dante makes frequent mention of them. Among other things they symbolize the great poet in Inferno IV. to develop so prodigiously the demonic imagery characteristic of later French romanticism. A poem like " La Beatrice " can be read only in the light of literary t

For many years critics, following Laforgue, were pleased to see in Baudelaire the inventor of an entirely new poetic language. This view has recently been changing. His linguistic poverty and conservatism have been stressed by Henri Peyre, and more important perhaps, Antoine Adam's recent critical edition of the Fleurs du mal demonstrates to how vast an extent Baudelaire was indebted to the Gautier of La Comedie de la mort, to Balzac, and to the French baroque poets. Baudelaire's neo-classical distribution of epithets has often been noted, but in the past it has usually been mentioned only to show that Baudelaire was Racinian and classical

(i.e., good) as opposed to romantic (i.e., bad). Again, the enormous place allegory occupies in Baudelaire's poetry has usually been confused by talk of “correspondences." It is time that Baudelaire be recognized as the archaizing poet he in many ways was. The use of old techniques is not in itself dishonoring, as some critics of modern French poetry seem to think. Indeed, it is only because of the pre-existence of a large body of religious symbolism that Baudelaire, along with Gautier, Hugo, and Nerval, was able to to develop so prodigiously the demonic imagery characteristic of later French romanticism.

CONCLUSION

Baudelaire has been marked as a poet of modernity. Modernity and its —fashionable, fleeting and contingent nature get encapsulated through the poetics of Baudelaire. This study material will introduce the students to the poetics of Charles Baudelaire. Baudelaire’s poems epitomize a modern subject that debunks the uncritical romanticization of beauty and its ideals. In the poems that we have in our syllabus— “The Ideal” and “La Beatrice”, Baudelaire uses a poetic paradigm different from the essentialized romantic lyric and classical monolith to vent to the cultural angst, anxieties and pains of modernity.

From the two poems what becomes perceptible is Baudelaire’s invocation of a trope of banality and ennui. Baudelaire’s poetics coalesce the sublime and the mundane; the particular and the universal. The cycle of evil at the end of "Spleen and Ideal," while clearly opposing the section's opening romantic cycle on the thematic plane, also reiterates in the space the assertion and subsequent evaporation of the speaking subject that characterizes the evolution of metonymic poetics from the end of the beauty cycle to spleen. The poetry of Baudelaire with a categorical rejection of memory and of the prospect of recuperating the identity of self metaphorically by reuniting past and present. In contrast to the cycle of evil immediately preceding it, the anti-lyrical metonymic poetics that underlay the intensification of things, and that appears here in the project to salvage poetic value in a wager against the ever-present menace of splenetic time. It also thematizes metonymy itself in the allegorical figure of decoded time, which now represents the context in which all poetic projects are pursued.

SUGGESTED READING

Abbott, Helen. Between Baudelaire and Mallarmé: Voice, Conversation and Music.

Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2016.

Acquisto, Joseph. The Fall out of Redemption: Writing and Thinking beyond Salvation in

Baudelaire, Cioran, Fondane, Agamben, and Nancy. Bloomsbury, 2016.

Benjamin, Walter, and Michael William Jennings. The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles

Baudelaire. Harvard University Press, 2006.

Hiddleston, James Andrew. Baudelaire and the Art of Memory. Clarendon Press, 2002.

Lloyd, Rosemary. The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire. Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Murphy, Margueritte S. Material Figures: Political Economy, Commercial Culture, and the

Aesthetic Sensibility of Charles Baudelaire. Rodopi, 2012.

Thompson, William J. Understanding Les Fleurs Du Mal: Critical Readings. Vanderbilt

University Press, 1997.

ASSIGNMENTS

Essay Type Questions

1. Baudelaire's poetics remain embedded within a conflict between the real and the ideal worlds. —Substantiate.
2. Comment on Baudelaire's Art of Poetry.
3. Show how Baudelaire's poetics embody the traits of modernity.

Short-answer Type Questions

1. Comment on Baudelaire's idea of Beauty.

2. How does Baudelaire recreate the myth of Beatrice in the poem "La Beatrice".

3. Comment on the formal aspects of Baudelaire's poetics.

BLOCK – IV

UNITS: 13-16

LIFE OF GALILEO

BY

BERTOLT BRECHT

CONTENT STRUCTURE:

Unit 13 (a): Bertolt Brecht – Life and Works

Unit 13 (b): Brecht's Theory and Practice of the "Epic Theatre"

Unit 13 (c): Act-wise Detailed Summary of the Play

Unit 14 (a): Analysis of the Character Of Galileo

Unit 14 (b): Analysis of the Character Of Virginia

Unit 14 (c): Father-daughter Relationship in the Play

Unit 15 (a): Historical Galileo versus Brecht's Galileo – A Comparative Study

Unit 15 (b): Moral and Social Responsibility of the Scientist

Unit 15 (c): Treatment of Knowledge and Ideas as Contagious Disease

Unit 16 (a): Scientific Progress versus Religious Tradition

Unit 16 (b): Freedom of Thought/Speech versus Censorship

Unit 16 (c): Major Symbols in the Play

i. Galileo's Telescope

ii. Pope Urban II's Vestments

iii. The Old Woman/Witch

Suggested Reading

Assignments

UNIT – 13

UNIT 13 (A): BERTOLT BRECHT – LIFE AND WORKS

Bertolt Brecht, original name Eugen Berthold Friedrich Brecht, (born February 10, 1898, Augsburg, Germany — died August 14, 1956, in East Berlin), was a German poet, playwright, and theatrical reformer in the Weimar Republic period (1918-1933) where he achieved notoriety through his work in the theatre, producing plays that often had a Marxist perspective. He is widely considered to be one of the most influential playwrights of the 20th century.

Brecht was born in Augsburg, Bavaria in 1898 to a Protestant mother and a Roman Catholic father. The modest house where he was born is today preserved as a Brecht Museum. Due to his grandmother's and his mother's influence, Brecht knew *The Bible*, a familiarity that would have a life-long effect on his writing. From his mother came the "dangerous image of the self-denying woman" that recurs in his drama. At school in Augsburg he met Caspar Neher, with whom he formed a life-long creative partnership. Neher designed many of the sets for Brecht's dramas and helped to forge the distinctive visual iconography of their "Epic Theatre".

Until 1924 Brecht lived in Bavaria, where he was born. When Brecht was 16, World War I broke out. Initially enthusiastic, Brecht soon changed his mind on seeing the lives of his classmates being destroyed by the army. Brecht was nearly expelled from school in 1915 for writing an essay in response to the line *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* from the Roman poet Horace, calling it *Zweckpropaganda* ("cheap propaganda for a specific purpose") and arguing that only an empty-headed person could be persuaded to die for their country. His expulsion was only prevented by the intervention of Romuald Sauer, a priest who also served as a substitute teacher at Brecht's school. On his father's recommendation, Brecht sought to avoid being conscripted into the army by exploiting a loophole which allowed for medical students to be deferred. He subsequently registered for a medical course at Munich University, where he enrolled in 1917. From July 1916, Brecht's newspaper articles began appearing under the new name "Bert Brecht" (his first theatre criticism for the *Augsburger Volkswille* appeared in October 1919).

Brecht's first full-length play, *Baal* (written in 1918) was a success. Brecht completed his second major play, *Drums in the Night*, in February 1919. Between November 1921 and April 1922, Brecht made acquaintance with many influential people in the Berlin cultural scene. Amongst them was the playwright Arnolt Bronnen with whom he established a joint venture, the Arnolt Bronnen / Bertolt Brecht Company. Brecht changed the spelling of his first name to Bertolt to rhyme with Arnolt. During this period he also developed a violently anti-bourgeois attitude that reflected his generation's deep disappointment in the civilization that had come crashing down at the end of World War I. Among Brecht's friends were members of the Dadaist group, who aimed at destroying what they condemned as the false standards of bourgeois art through derision and iconoclastic satire.

In 1922, it was announced that Brecht had been awarded the prestigious Kleist Prize (probably Germany's most significant literary award, until it was abolished in 1932) for his first three plays (*Baal*, *Drums in the Night*, and *In the Jungle).* The man who taught him the elements of Marxism in the late 1920s was Karl Korsch, an eminent Marxist theoretician who had been a Communist member of the Reichstag but had been expelled from the German Communist Party in 1926. In May of that year, Brecht's *In the Jungle* premiered in Munich. Opening night proved to be a "scandal"—a phenomenon that would characterize many of his later productions during the Weimar Republic—in which Nazis blew whistles and threw stink bombs at the actors on the stage. In 1924, Brecht worked with the novelist and playwright Lion Feuchtwanger on an adaptation of Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* that proved to be a milestone in Brecht's early theatrical and dramaturgical development. Brecht's *Edward II* constituted his first attempt at collaborative writing and was the first of many classic texts he was to adapt. As his first solo directorial début, he later credited it as the germ of his conception of "Epic Theatre".

That September, a job as assistant dramaturg at Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater—at the time one of the leading three or four theatres in the world—brought him to Berlin. In Berlin (1924–33) he worked briefly for the directors Max Reinhardt and Erwin Piscator, but mainly with his own group of associates. In 1925, Brecht began to develop his *Man Equals Man* project, which was to become the first product of the 'Brecht collective'—that shifting group of friends and collaborators on whom he henceforward depended. These collaborative approaches to artistic production, together with aspects of Brecht's writing and style of theatrical production, mark Brecht's work from this period as part of the *Neue*

Sachlichkeit movement. The collective's work mirrored the artistic climate of the middle 1920s. In these years, he developed his theory of "epic theatre" and an austere form of irregular verse. He also became a Marxist. In 1926, Brecht began studying Marxism and socialism in earnest. Inspired by the developments in USSR, Brecht wrote a number of agitprop plays, praising the Bolshevik collectivism.

The year 1927 also saw the first collaboration between Brecht and the young composer Kurt Weill. Together they developed Brecht's *Mahagonny* project. From that point on Caspar Neher became an integral part of the collaborative effort, with words, music and visuals conceived in relation to one another from the start. This collective adapted John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, with Brecht's lyrics set to music by Kurt Weill. Retitled as *The Threepenny Opera* (*Die Dreigroschenoper*), it was the biggest hit in Berlin of the 1920s. One of its most famous lines underscored the hypocrisy of conventional morality imposed by the Church, working in conjunction with the established order, in the face of working-class hunger and deprivation. The masterpiece of the Brecht/Weill collaborations, *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (*Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*), caused an uproar when it premiered in 1930 in Leipzig, with Nazis in the audience protesting. The *Mahagonny* opera would premiere later in Berlin in 1931 as a triumphant sensation.

Fearing persecution, Brecht left Nazi Germany in February 1933, just after Hitler took power. After brief spells in Prague, Zurich and Paris, went into exile—in Scandinavia (1933–41), mainly in Denmark. During this period Brecht also travelled frequently to Copenhagen, Paris, Moscow, New York and London for various projects and collaborations. When the war seemed imminent in April 1939, he moved to Stockholm, Sweden, where he remained for a year. After Hitler invaded Norway and Denmark, Brecht left Sweden for Helsinki, Finland, where he lived and waited for his visa for the United States until 3 May 1941. During this time he wrote the play *Mr Puntila and his Man Matti* (*Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*) with Hella Wuolijoki. In Germany, his books were burned and his citizenship was withdrawn. He was cut off from the German theatre; but between 1937 and 1941 he wrote most of his great plays, his major theoretical essays and dialogues, and many of the poems collected as *Svendborger Gedichte* (1939). The plays of Brecht's exile years became famous in the author's own and other productions. He expressed his opposition to the National Socialist and Fascist movements in his most famous plays: *Life of Galileo*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Good*

Woman of Szechwan, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*, and many others.

Brecht was blacklisted by movie studio bosses and interrogated by the House Un-American Activities Committee. Along with about 41 other Hollywood writers, directors, actors and producers, he was subpoenaed to appear before the HUAC in September 1947. Although he was one of 19 witnesses who declared that they would refuse to appear, Brecht eventually decided to testify. He later explained that he had followed the advice of attorneys and had not wanted to delay a planned trip to Europe. On 30 October 1947, Brecht testified that he had never been a member of the Communist Party. He made wry jokes throughout the proceedings, punctuating his inability to speak English well with continuous references to the translators present, who transformed his German statements into English ones unintelligible to himself. Brecht's decision to appear before the committee led to criticism, including accusations of betrayal. The day after his testimony, on 31 October, Brecht returned to Europe.

He spent a year in Zürich, Switzerland. In February 1948, Brecht staged an adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*, based on a translation by Hölderlin. It was published under the title *Antigonemodell 1948*, accompanied by an essay, "A Little Organum for the Theatre". The essence of his theory of drama, as revealed in this work, is the idea that a truly Marxist drama must avoid the Aristotelian premise that the audience should be made to believe that what they are witnessing is happening here and now. For he saw that if the audience really felt that the emotions of heroes of the past—Oedipus, or Lear, or Hamlet—could equally have been their own reactions, then the Marxist idea that human nature is not constant but a result of changing historical conditions would automatically be invalidated. Brecht, therefore, argued that the theatre should not seek to make its audience believe in the presence of the characters on the stage—should not make it identify with them, but should rather follow the method of the epic poet's art, which is to make the audience realize that what it sees on the stage is merely an account of past events that it should watch with critical detachment. Hence, the "epic" (narrative, nondramatic) theatre is based on detachment, on the *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect), achieved through a number of devices that remind the spectator that he is being presented with a demonstration of human behaviour in scientific spirit rather than with an illusion of reality, in short, that the theatre is only a theatre and not the world itself.

In 1949, he moved to East Berlin and established his own theatre company there, the Berliner Ensemble. He retained his Austrian nationality (granted in 1950). Henceforward the Ensemble and the staging of his own plays had first claim on Brecht's time. Often suspected in Eastern Europe because of his unorthodox aesthetic theories and denigrated or boycotted in the West for his Communist opinions, he yet had a great triumph at the Paris Théâtre des Nations in 1955. Though he was never a member of the Communist Party, Brecht had been schooled in Marxism by the dissident communist Karl Korsch. Korsch's version of the Marxist dialectic influenced Brecht greatly, both his aesthetic theory and theatrical practice. Brecht received the Stalin Peace Prize in 1954. His proximity to Marxist thought made him controversial in Austria, where his plays were boycotted by directors and not performed for more than ten years. Brecht wrote very few plays in his final years in East Berlin, none of them as famous as his previous works. He dedicated himself to directing plays and developing the talents of the next generation of young directors and dramaturgs. Brecht died on 14 August 1956 of a heart attack at the age of 58.

UNIT 13 (B): BRECHT'S THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THE "EPIC THEATRE"

Although Bertolt Brecht's first plays were written in Germany during the 1920s, he was not widely known until much later. Eventually, his theories of stage presentation exerted more influence on the course of mid-century theatre in the West than did those of any other individual. This was largely because he proposed a direct contrast to the practice encouraged by the Russian director Konstantin Stanislavsky and his inclination towards "realism" that emphasized on the construction of a "well-made play" which dominated the playwriting of the time. In such plays, the audience was persuaded by staging methods and naturalistic acting to believe that the action onstage was "real."

As a writer, director, dramaturg and theatre theorist, Brecht's impact on European theatre was unrivalled in the twentieth century. His primary artistic objective was to create a theatre appropriate for a scientific age. By the late 1920s, it had become apparent to Brecht that this objective of his would require not only a new kind of dramatic writing but also the destruction of the bourgeois theatre system. His earliest drama was influenced by the plays of Büchner and Frank Wedekind, manifesting some of the subjectivity and heightened emotion of the

Expressionist drama, but also showing a gradual transition to the greater detachment evident in his later plays. In rebelling against bourgeois values, the protagonists of these early plays anticipated the Marxist critique that Brecht was to articulate more coherently in his later plays. Brecht wanted his work to revolutionize theatre's bourgeois values and bring about socio-political changes. Robert Gordon introduced the aesthetic principles and techniques that Brecht believed could achieve these aims and explored how they operated in some of his best-known plays.

Brecht's earliest work was heavily influenced by German Expressionism, but it was his preoccupation with Marxism and the idea that man and society could be intellectually analyzed that led him to develop his theory of the "epic theatre". Brecht believed that theatre should appeal not to the spectator's feelings but to his reason. While still providing entertainment, it should be strongly didactic and capable of provoking social changes.
Brecht was interested in self-consciously retelling a story rather than realistically embodying the events of a narrative. His techniques encouraged the spectator to view the way in which the playwright and actors presented the tale, exposing the mechanisms of theatre, and promoting an attitude of curiosity rather than the emotional and empathic response to the acting, typical of the naturalistic and expressionistic forms dominant in the German theatre at the time. His admiration for the political comedian Karl Valentin and the films of Charlie Chaplin provided models for the combination of social observation and *Spass* (fun) with which he intended to animate the theatre so that a proletarian audience might attend with the enthusiasm and critical interest of spectators at a sports match.

Brecht's first proper experiment in the epic theatre was *Man Equals Man* (1926), written and produced by the "Brecht collective" with the significant participation of Elisabeth Hauptmann, whose translations of Kipling were employed in the writing of the play. Somewhat vaguely located in colonial British India, *Man Equals Man* is a parable of the malleability of human identity, exposing how an authoritarian social order, in this case, the army, manipulates and moulds individuals to make them useful as soldiers, factory workers, pupils, etc. Although not made explicit in the play, this is the first time that Brecht's drama explores what is essentially a Marxist view of how the base (economic) structure of society shapes the specific class identity of any individual, and how a change in material circumstances might offer the dialectical possibility of changing social and therefore personal relationships. Already committed to a socialist view of the need for change, Brecht began to read Marx in the mid-1920s, studying

the Marxian concept of dialectics under the tutelage of the communist dissident Karl Korsch. His new understanding of Marxism, together with his work as dramaturg for Erwin Piscator (1926–27) on the development of epic theatre, led Brecht to collaborate with Hauptmann and the composer Kurt Weill on achieving the 'literarisation of theatre' by way of a satirical musical, *The Threepenny Opera* (1928). Piscator's theatre involved supplementing the core drama of human relationships with information and opinion communicated via modern technological devices such as photographs, literary captions and documentary films. These technologies would politically contextualise the fictional representation to provoke reflections on the playwright's point of view. In *The Threepenny Opera* Brecht re-functioned the apparatus of Piscator's theatre to make the dramatic structure itself an instrument for analysing social reality and promoting change.

Having learned that a new form of theatre could not be established by merely burlesquing the conventions of the bourgeois theatre, Brecht's experiments before his exile from Germany in 1933 involved the exploration of the Lehrstück (learning play) – a new type of proletarian theatre in which workers or students would be both spectators and actors. The series of short plays written in 1930 (*He Who Said Yes/He Who Said No, The Measures Taken, The Exception and the Rule*) represent the most radical development of his drama as an instrument for modelling and investigating social relationships. Their transformation of dialectical praxis into a Marxian aesthetics of theatre was exemplified in the plays created during his enforced exile from Germany between 1933 and 1947. Lacking the material conditions to conduct experiments in production, Brecht focussed his energy on the writing of plays, as well as the theorisation of his aesthetic practice in a series of groundbreaking essays. Four of these plays – *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939), *The Life of Galileo* (1939), *The Good Person of Setzuan* (1942) and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1945) – have achieved the status of modern classics.

Epic theatre, German Episches Theater, is a form of didactic drama presenting a series of loosely connected scenes that avoid illusion and often interrupt the storyline to address the audience directly with analysis, argument, or documentation. Its dramatic antecedents include the episodic structure and didactic nature of the pre-Expressionist drama of the German playwright Frank Wedekind and the Expressionist theatre of the German directors Erwin Piscator (with whom Brecht collaborated in 1927) and Leopold Jessner, both of whom made exuberant use of the technical effects that came to characterize the epic theatre. Brecht

developed the combined theory and practice of his "Epic theatre" by synthesizing and extending the experiments of Erwin Piscator and Vsevolod Meyerhold to explore the theatre as a forum for political ideas and the creation of a critical aesthetics of dialectical materialism.

For Brecht, the theatre had an educational aspect. Rather than writing plays that strove for the Aristotelian goal of making the audience identify with the characters onstage and cooperatively experience their emotions, Brecht thought the audience should observe with critical detachment. Epic Theatre proposed that a play should not cause the spectator to identify emotionally with the characters or action onstage, but should instead provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the action happening. Brecht thought that the experience of a climactic catharsis of emotion left an audience complacent. Instead, he wanted his audiences to adopt a critical perspective in order to recognize social injustice and exploitation and to be moved to go forth from the theatre and effect change in the world outside.

For this purpose, Brecht employed the use of several techniques which reminded the spectators that the play is a representation of reality and not reality itself. By highlighting the constructed nature of the theatrical events, Brecht hoped to communicate that the audience's reality was equally constructed, and as such, was changeable.

Three fundamental aesthetic principles are manifest in the plays and explained in his essays:

1. ***Verfremdungseffekt* –**

One of Brecht's most important principles was what he called the *Verfremdungseffekt* (translated as "defamiliarization effect", "distancing effect", or "estrangement effect", and often mistranslated as "alienation effect"). This involved, Brecht wrote, "stripping the event of its self-evident, familiar, obvious quality and creating a sense of astonishment and curiosity about them". The *V-effekt* is a technique of writing and performance that makes everyday things appear as surprising in order to enable a spectator to interrogate each dramatic event rather than regard it as part of a 'natural' order. By exposing the existing social system with its injustice, inequality and corruption as arbitrary rather than normal, the *V-effekt* demonstrates that it can be changed. The primary *V-effekt* in performance should be to 'show the showing' – to remind the spectator that the play itself is an illustration of the author's point of view rather than a slice of reality. By making the spectator conscious of the art of its

construction, a performance enables her to participate actively in a dialogical argument about how and why a change in society should be effected.

Brecht's perspective was Marxian, and his intention was to appeal to his audience's intellect in presenting moral problems and reflecting contemporary social realities on the stage. He wished to block their emotional responses and hinder their tendency to empathize with the characters and become caught up in the action. To this end, he used "alienating," or "distancing," effects to cause the audience to think objectively about the play, to reflect on its argument, to understand it, and to draw conclusions. To this end, Brecht employed techniques such as the actor's direct address to the audience, harsh and bright stage lighting, the use of songs to interrupt the action, explanatory placards, the transposition of text to the third person or past tense in rehearsals, and speaking the stage directions out loud.

Brecht was also influenced by Chinese theatre and used its aesthetics as an argument for *Verfremdungseffekt*. Brecht believed, "Traditional Chinese acting also knows the alienation effect, and applies it most subtly. The [Chinese] performer portrays incidents of utmost passion, but without his delivery becoming heated." Brecht attended a Chinese opera performance and was introduced to the famous Chinese opera performer Mei Lanfang in 1935. However, Brecht was sure to distinguish between Epic and Chinese theatre. He recognized that the Chinese style was not a "transportable piece of technique", and that epic theatre sought to historicize and address social and political issues.

As Brecht did not want the audience to have any emotional attachment to his characters, he did various things to break it. Here are some of the techniques he used –

- **Breaking the fourth wall –** Rather than allowing the audience to sit passively and get lost in the show, the actors will sometimes directly address the audience with a speech, comment or a question - breaking the fourth wall.
- **Montage –** Short movie clips are put together, often to show factual events. Sometimes clips are edited to juxtapose each other, and/or sometimes the montages are used to juxtapose each other, and/or sometimes the montages are used to highlight the issues Brecht is trying to communicate.

- **Use of song, music and dance –** some of Brecht's work includes songs, music and dance. Sometimes the songs are juxtaposed ironically, with cheery upbeat music but with dark lyrics. One of the most famous song lyrics comes from Brecht's 'The Threepenny Opera': 'Who is the bigger criminal: he who robs a bank or he who founds one?'
- **Narration –** Narration is used to remind the audience that they are watching a story. Sometimes the narrator will tell the audience what is about to happen in the story before it happens, because if the audience knows the outcome then they may not get as emotionally involved.
- **Minimal set, costumes, props and lighting** – Brecht believed the stage should be brightly lit at all times. Sets should not look realistic, just suggestive. Actors should use minimal props, often only one per character. Also, props can be used in several different ways, for example, a suitcase may become a desk.
- **Coming out of character –** Actors will sometimes come out of character, often at heightened moments of drama, to remind the audience that it is a piece of fiction that they are watching.
- **Using placards –** A placard, or projection screen can be used to give the audience some extra factual information, for example, it might say how many people have died in a particular war. Placards can also be used to introduce characters in generic ways, e.g. 'mum,' or 'dad.' Placards are also used to introduce a new scene or to tell the audience when one has finished.
- **Freeze frames/tableaux –** The actors may go into a freeze frame, to break the action. Sometimes it's done so that the audience can stop and think critically for a moment. And sometimes it's done so that the narrator can speak, or so that an actor can come out of character and perhaps break the fourth wall. There are many other techniques he invented too, but these are some of his most famous.

In recent years, it has been agreed upon by Brecht scholars that the popular English translation "Alienation Effect" is a misleading one. A Similar word, "entfremdung" is a Marxist term which is usually translated as alienation. The meaning of this word relates to the social alienation of individuals due to the class structure but has no connection to the theatre. There is evidence of Brecht using this term as well and coupled with the fact that he was a Marxist, may have been the reason for the earlier scholars to confuse the two words. Therefore,

"verfremdung" is translated currently as "defamiliarisation" or "to make the familiar, strange" and not alienation.

2. Historicisation –

It was a method used by Brecht to contrast the past with the present in order to identify the historical determinants of contemporary life. Rather than representing human nature as universal and unchanging, Brecht required the actor to portray every incident in a play as a unique response to a given historical situation. In *Mother Courage*, for instance, Brecht deliberately engineered a comparison of historical and then present-day circumstances: by setting the play during the Thirty Years War (1618–48) – a different yet comparable historical situation to 1939 – he encouraged the spectator to think in historical terms about the material conditions that had precipitated the war which was about to engulf Europe.

His historical dramas are presented as narratives whose central issues and themes offer the audience material to reflect upon contemporary problems. The *Life of Galileo* is one such epic historical drama. Brecht selects the events of the historical character Galileo's life that are most conducive to a treatment of the themes with which Brecht is concerned and writes a narrative around them. For example, while it is true that Galileo earned a position as a court mathematician at the Florentine court, Brecht's scene in which Galileo presents the telescope to the prince and the scholars of his court, who all refuse to look through it, is completely fabricated. Galileo was engaged as a tutor to Prince Cosimo II (Cosimo de' Medici) (1590–1621), and it is thus likely that the prince did look through one of Galileo's telescopes at some point. However, the scene advances Brecht's theme of the importance of speaking truth to power, showing Galileo offering truth to members of powerful regimes, which they refuse in preference for faith in and obedience to the social, religious, and political order.

3. Gestus –

Brecht's most original principle of dramaturgical and theatrical construction was his notion of *Gestus*. With an implication in German of both 'gist' and 'gesture', the *Gestus* is a piece of physical action on stage that communicates social meaning. The fable (story) of the play is constructed by the writer to present a series of nodal points, each of which is displayed by the actors in the form of a *Gestus*. Instead of emphasising the emotional or psychological predisposition of characters, the *Gestus* allows the actor to demonstrate the social attitudes of one character by contrast with others, in collaboration sculpting a momentary tableau that the

spectator views as a picture of the social relationships pertaining under a specific set of historical circumstances. The careful composition of each visual grouping also reminds the spectator of the conscious artistry of the work's construction, openly indicating the author's viewpoint.

4. Songs and Poetry – Most of Brecht's plays include songs, which allow the performer to comment upon the action and illustrate selected characters' emotions in an artistic mode without manipulating the spectator to empathise directly with the characters in action. The cognitive disruption provoked by all of Brecht's techniques serves to alter the spectator's habitual way of thinking about the way things are. By exposing the contradictions inherent in a capitalist society, a play could enable the spectator to devise ways to change the world into a place fit for people to live in. Brecht used his poetry to criticize European culture, including Nazis, and the German bourgeoisie. Brecht's poetry is marked by the effects of the First and Second World Wars. Throughout his theatrical production, poems are incorporated into the plays with music.

Brecht saw little value in the realistic theatre as we know it. Epic theatre was markedly different from naturalistic and realistic theatre which arrived on European stages toward the end of the 19th century with works by Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov. Brecht once likened realism to that of a drug where the audience became pacified in a weakened state of awareness. He wanted his epic theatre to *awaken* the audience, even referring to them as "spectators" – they were to be observers, not participants. Brecht's modernist concern with drama-as-a-medium led to his refinement of the "epic form" of the drama. This dramatic form is related to similar modernist innovations in other arts, including the strategy of divergent chapters in James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*, Sergei Eisenstein's evolution of a constructivist "montage" in the cinema, and Picasso's introduction of cubist "collage" in the visual arts.

In contrast to many other avant-garde approaches, however, Brecht had no desire to destroy art as an institution; rather, he hoped to "re-function" the theatre to a new social use. In this regard, he was a vital participant in the aesthetic debates of his era — particularly over the "high art/popular culture" dichotomy — vying with the likes of Theodor W. Adorno, György Lukács, Ernst Bloch, and developing a close friendship with Walter Benjamin. Brechtian theatre articulated popular themes and forms with avant-garde formal experimentation to create a modernist realism that stood in sharp contrast both to its psychological and socialist varieties.

“Brecht’s work is the most important and original in European drama since Ibsen and Strindberg,” Raymond Williams argued.

After their return to Berlin in 1948, Brecht and his wife Helene Weigel established the Berliner Ensemble, where Brecht was able to produce his later masterpieces in the manner of the dialectical theatre he had envisaged since 1930. The performances given by the company around Europe made a huge impact on theatre practitioners, first in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Britain, but eventually influencing the growth of consciously political modes of theatre throughout the world. Although later in Brecht’s life he preferred to call it dialectal theatre. Brecht believed classical approaches to theatre were escapist, and he was more interested in facts and reality rather than escapism. Epic theatre doesn’t attempt to lay down a tidy plot and story, but leaves issues unresolved, confronting the audience with sometimes uncomfortable questions.

Brecht has many admirers—and many critics. Some critics argue that to touch an audience deeply you need to affect them emotionally, which Brecht was opposed to doing. Others criticise Brecht because he was very opposed to corrupt post-war East Germany, but still accepted money from them to create his company the Berlin Ensemble. Theatre critic Michael Billington (who seems to admire Brecht as well as criticise him) wrote that Brecht, ‘was a shameless magpie who stole from everyone, often without acknowledgement.’

UNIT 13 (C): DETAILED SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

Life of Galileo is a literal translation of the original German title of the play, *Leben des Galilei*. The title reflects the central subject of the play, which dramatizes significant moments in the adult life and scientific career of the famous astronomer Galileo Galilei (1564–1642). The play begins in the year 1609, when Galileo Galilei first learns of the idea of a telescope, recently invented in the Netherlands, from Ludovico Marsili. The play relates the roughly thirty-year period in the famous astronomer’s life, when he made his greatest discoveries, faced retribution from the Catholic Church, recanted his life’s work, and eventually, continued to research and write in secret. The playwright Bertolt Brecht dramatizes the historical people and events upon which the play is based, creating a narrative that makes historical events relevant to the contemporary world.

Scene 1

Summary

Life of Galileo opens in 1609, with Galileo Galilei, a professor of mathematics at Padua University. He is at home (Padua, Italy) in his study with Andrea Sarti, his assistant and the son of Galileo's housekeeper. His housekeeper, Mrs. Sarti, enters to deliver a package sent from the Court of Naples. The delivery is an astronomical instrument, which Galileo describes as an instrument for the contemporary understanding of the cosmos; the instrument's eight metal bands correspond to the eight crystal globes that encircle the Earth, contain the stars, and revolve around the stationary Earth, represented by a fixed ball in the centre. Galileo tells Andrea that this concept of the cosmos is outdated and suggests that people will soon recognize that the Earth revolves around the sun.

Mrs. Sarti enters again to introduce a young gentleman, Ludovico Marsili, who wishes to take lessons from Galileo. Ludovico has recently returned from study in the Netherlands where he has seen a recently invented tubular instrument with two glass lenses that magnifies things that are far away. Galileo seeks to understand this new device. The Curator of the University enters and Galileo quickly asks to borrow a *scudo*, a silver coin, from him and sends Andrea to buy a pair of glass lenses. The curator tells Galileo that the university has denied the scientist's request for a salary. Galileo tells the Curator that he may have an invention that might interest the city's businessmen. The Curator indicates that if the businesses are able to profit from the invention, it may be worth some money for Galileo. The Curator exits, and Andrea returns with the lenses. Galileo holds the lenses in the arrangement of a telescope, and Andrea is amazed at what he can see.

Analysis

The astronomical instrument that Galileo and Andrea discuss in this scene is a physical manifestation of the conception of the universe that Galileo's research will challenge and eventually overturn. The model of fixed spheres encircling a stationary Earth dates back to the astronomical theories of the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BCE). The model had been revised even in antiquity, and scientific researchers were making significant, discrediting discoveries before the time of the historical Galileo (1564–1642). In particular, the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) proposed that the sun was fixed, while the Earth and other planets orbited around it.

Galileo's most significant discoveries relied upon the telescope, which Dutch scientists first invented in 1608. Word of this new instrument spread through Europe quickly, and Galileo was producing them already in 1609. His refinements increased the magnification power and enabled the observations that defined his theories of planetary motion.

Galileo's conversations with Ludovico and the Curator set up some of the central conflicts that will take place throughout the play. Galileo and the Curator discuss Galileo's salary, and he will continue to struggle to find a patron willing to pay for and support his work. Likewise, Galileo only takes on Ludovico as a student because he needs a way to make a living, even though Marsili is not interested in science and does not understand it. Marsili, moreover, represents the bulk of Italian society, which has little practical use for the theorems of astronomers.

Scene 2

Summary

The astronomer Galileo Galilei, his daughter Virginia Galilei, and his friend and assistant Sagredo stand at the Great Arsenal in Venice, Italy. They have arrived to present Galileo's new "invention" – the telescope he has created according to the description of the Dutch telescope provided to him by Ludovico Marsili in Scene 1. The Curator explains to the gathered senators and officials the advantages of the new technology, and Virginia presents the telescope. While the Curator speaks, Galileo tells Sagredo that he has discovered that the moon does not produce its own light and that he now knows what makes up the Milky Way. At the end of the presentation, the Curator tells Galileo that, after all, he has earned a generous salary from the university.

After the Curator's presentation, a prosperous Florentine man named Matti approaches Galileo with an offer of employment, but Galileo refuses him. Senators are amazed as they test out the telescope. Virginia brings Ludovico to Galileo and Ludovico implies that he knows Galileo's "invention" is modelled after the instrument he described, but Virginia remains unaware of the intellectual theft.

Analysis

The historical Galileo's astronomical research relied upon the telescopes that he designed, but he did not actually invent them, a fact that Brecht's characters implicitly critique in this scene. Dutch scientists invented the first telescopes in 1608, and the concept rapidly spread through

scientific communities in Europe. By 1609, Galileo had heard of them, created his own, and was selling his design to the Venetian Senate for larger-scale commercial and military production.

Brecht's play presents Galileo's sale of his design as a purposeful deception of the Curator and the Venetian Senate that is aimed at monetary gain. By calling it his own invention, Galileo garners a significant salary as well as fame and connections with other potential patrons, like Matti. Ludovico, attending the presentation of the instrument, realizes that Galileo has stolen the idea from his description of the Dutch instrument that he saw during his studies in the Netherlands. He does not, however, tell Virginia of Galileo's actions, allowing her to maintain her adoring admiration for her father.

Scene 3

Summary

Back in Galileo Galilei's study in Padua, in 1610, Galileo with his friend and assistant Sagredo use a telescope to study the moon. Galileo shows Sagredo that the surface of the moon contains mountains and valleys that catch the light of the sun as the moon rotates, thus proving that the moon is not a star. The Curator arrives, angrily accusing Galileo of deceiving the Venetian Senate by selling his telescope as his own unique invention even though the Dutch had already invented it.

After the Curator leaves, Sagredo asks if Galileo knew that the Dutch had invented the telescope. Galileo responds that he did, but his telescope was better and "besides, I needed the money." They return to the subject of research, with Galileo showing Sagredo the stars of the Milky Way and moons that revolve around Jupiter. This last observation proves that the ancient conception of the universe, a stationary Earth surrounded by crystal orbs that hold up the stars, cannot be upheld. Sagredo begins to realize the implications of Galileo's observations, and wonders, "Where is God in your system of the universe?" Galileo claims that he is concerned with math, not theology and that the truth of visible observations will conquer all challenges.

Galileo's daughter Virginia enters, awake early because she is on her way to mass with one of Galileo's students, Ludovico, and the Galileis' housekeeper Mrs. Sarti. Galileo tells her that he plans to name the moons of Jupiter and that he has just discovered the Medicean planets after the Prince of Florence, Cosimo II of the Medici family. With this gesture, Galileo aims to obtain a paid position in the Medici court, so he writes a letter to inform the prince of his discovery. Sagredo warns Galileo that he is courting disaster and even execution by promoting

theories that run counter to the Catholic teachings, saying, “Can you see the Pope scribbling a note in his diary: ‘Tenth of January, 1610, Heaven abolished’?”

Analysis

Galileo’s major discoveries that are discussed in this scene amount to a challenge to accepted Church doctrine. As Sagredo observes, the model of the universe that Galileo’s discoveries propose does not align with the accepted understanding of Biblical passages about God. Galileo and Sagredo stay up all night searching for the truth observed with their own eyes, even when that truth challenges faith. By contrast, Galileo’s daughter Virginia, along with Ludovico and Mrs. Sarti, represents the actions of good Christians who sleep without searching for personal knowledge and attend mass to hear the word of God.

Galileo’s casual response to the Curator's anger at being deceived, as well as his plan to flatter his way into a court appointment, return to the issue of how Galileo is able to make a living. Brecht’s take on this form of patronage is a critical one, implying that Galileo is doing something dishonest or inappropriate. However, in this time period, intellectuals and artists relied upon patrons like universities, the Church, or wealthy nobility to finance their work. The historical Galileo Galilei sought and won a position as a court mathematician for Cosimo II (1590–1621) by dedicating his book to him and naming the moon of Jupiter the “Medicean stars”.

Scene 4

Summary

Having achieved a position at the court of Florence and received a well-appointed home there, Galileo receives the Prince of Florence, Cosimo II (Cosimo de' Medici), along with his court and some professors, including a philosopher. Galileo and his assistants, Andrea Sarti and Federzoni, encourage members of the court to look through the telescope and see the truth with their own eyes. The professors challenge the discoveries, which Galileo claims cannot be possible according to Aristotle, and that Galileo should be worried about where his discoveries will lead. Galileo continues to ask them to observe the truth. Eventually, the prince is called to another appointment and everyone leaves without looking through the telescope. The scene ends with the prince’s Lord Chamberlain telling Galileo that the prince will hear the counsel of Christopher Clavius, the Chief Astronomer to the Papal College in Rome.

Analysis

The historical Galileo Galilei was a court mathematician and a tutor to Cosimo II (Cosimo de' Medici). He won his place there with his discoveries, by dedicating a short book on the subject, entitled *Sidereus Nuncius* (*The Sidereal Messenger*), to the prince and naming the moons of Jupiter after the Medici family. However, at the same time, Galileo's theories contradicted the established understanding of the cosmos and the heavens. Brecht's telling of Galileo's time in Florence focuses on the conflict between Galileo's theories and the Catholic Church's doctrine. By staging a discussion between philosophers and mathematicians who refuse to look through the telescope, Brecht emphasizes the contrast between scientific observation and faith. Scientific research is founded upon the principle that observation will lead to the truth, while faith requires people to believe without visible, tangible evidence. In this scene, Galileo indicates that the truth is there to observe, but the Florentine court members prefer to defer to the official papal opinion, which they will hear from Christopher Clavius (1537–1612), Chief Astronomer to the Papal College in Rome.

Scene 5

Summary

In 1611, Galileo attends a meeting in the Collegium Romanum, a Roman Catholic university in Rome, and encounters various religious figures who are critical of his theories. Galileo sits by himself in a corner, while monks and cardinals quote passages from the Bible that they interpret as incompatible with Galileo's findings. At the end of the scene, Christopher Clavius, Chief Astronomer to the Papal College in Rome, walks onstage with his entourage of astronomers. As he passes, Clavius says, "He is right." The official finding upholds Galileo's research.

Analysis

The historical Christopher Clavius (1537–1612) was a Jesuit priest and one of the foremost mathematicians and astronomers of his day. Clavius became the Chief Astronomer to the Papal College, in large part, because he was firmly opposed to the Copernican theories of a heliocentric solar system. Clavius and Galileo met in 1587 and corresponded afterwards. In 1611, after Galileo published his findings on the phases of the moon, the Pope asked Clavius to evaluate his findings; Clavius was able to use a telescope to observe the same phenomena and confirm Galileo's theories. He further indicated that these findings required a revision to

the existing understanding of the cosmos that placed the Earth at a fixed centre within encircling heavenly orbs that contained the sun and stars. Clavius' confirmation of Galileo's findings was a monumental victory, a step toward papal recognition of theories that directly contradicted Church interpretations of passages of the Bible. Brecht characterizes the monks and cardinals as mocking and fearful of Galileo's research while showing Clavius as having a reasoned and evidence-based approach.

Scene 6

Summary

Still in Rome, Galileo attends an event at the house of Cardinal Bellarmin with his daughter Virginia Galilei and his pupil Ludovico Marsili. Galileo and Virginia celebrate Christopher Clavius' confirmation of Galileo's discoveries. Ludovico continues to express some skepticism of Galile''s theories. Cardinal Bellarmin and Cardinal Barberini (later Pope Urban VIII) enter and begin to converse with Galileo. Cardinal Barberini apparently enjoys sparring with Galileo. Cardinal Bellarmin is more dismissive and requests the secretaries to take notes as he begins a formal discussion, presenting news from the Holy Office of the papacy. Bellarmin asks a secretary to read a decree that the Copernican theory that "the Earth revolves around the sun is foolish, absurd, and a heresy." Galileo is warned to "abandon these teachings." The censure takes Galileo by surprise, and Bellarmin responds to him that science should follow the Church.

The secretaries deliver their report of the conversation to the papal inquisitor, the man in charge of investigating heresies, who reads through their notes. The inquisitor stops Virginia, who happens to be passing by. He congratulates her on her engagement to Ludovico Marsili and speaks with her about her father and her priest. After learning she is a good Christian, the inquisitor tells her that her father will need her in the coming days.

Analysis

Cardinal Bellarmin (1542–1621) and Cardinal Barberini (1568–1644) represent the growing challenges with Galileo's research. Even if Christopher Clavius, the Chief Astronomer to the Papal College, had confirmed that Galileo's observations were correct, the papacy still had an interest in preserving the ancient idea of the heavens, which could be interpreted to align with the Biblical scripture. Brecht characterizes Cardinal Barberini here as a man who is interested in mathematics and astronomy and who is willing to listen to Galileo's theories. However, he

is restricted by the mandates of his office, and he and Cardinal Bellarmin deliver the censure handed down by the papacy. The Inquisitor, who continues to gather evidence even after the censure has been passed on, foreshadows ongoing troubles between Galileo and the Church. This scene can be dated to the year 1616 when the edict declaring Copernican theories as heresy was decreed.

Scene 7

Summary

In Rome, in the Garden of the Florentine Ambassador of Rome, Galileo meets with his friend and assistant who is called simply the Little Monk. The Little Monk confirms that he has also observed what Galileo has seen, and yet he challenges Galileo's idea that these theories should be made available to the public. He argues that free research is dangerous to society; if the peasants had no religion to sustain them, their tiring and difficult lives would lose all meaning. Galileo eventually feels beaten in this argument and throws a manuscript on the ground. The Little Monk asks what it is and begins to read it; he asks Galileo to explain a sentence he doesn't understand and he is drawn back into the quest for scientific knowledge.

Analysis

The Little Monk argues against Galileo from a position that is slightly different from that of the Church. Although he is a priest, he is also an astronomer, as well as the son of a farmer. His unique perspective means that while he can observe and agree with Galileo's observations and proposals, he can also rationalize the censuring decree that the papacy gave to Galileo in Scene 6. The Little Monk wonders here about the effect of scientific research on regular people, and Galileo does not provide a strong defence. Brecht uses this scene to raise questions about the scientists' responsibility for the long-term effects of their research on broader society.

Scene 8

Summary

In 1623, Galileo's daughter, Virginia Galilei, and his housekeeper, Mrs. Sarti, discuss Virginia and her fiancé Ludovico's horoscope and upcoming marriage. Galileo is in his study in Florence, studying floating bodies and struggling to avoid the kind of research that was censured by the Vatican. The rector of the university brings Galileo a new treatise on sun spots dedicated to Galileo by the author. His assistants begin to discuss the origin of the sun spots, but Galileo restrains himself. The others guess that he does so because researching the sun

spots would lead him to discuss the heliocentric nature of the universe, and he fears papal retribution.

Ludovico arrives unannounced, followed by servants with baggage, but Galileo does not recognize him at first, and the Little Monk asks him what is wrong with his eyes. Virginia leaves because she has something to show to Ludovico. The discussion turns to the expected rise of Cardinal Barberini, a mathematician, to the papal seat. Galileo hopes that this means change and begins to take up the subject of the sun spots. Ludovico cautions Galileo that even a scientist Pope cannot support Galileo's theory because of the detrimental effect on the common people. Ludovico threatens to break his engagement to Virginia if Galileo continues his research. Galileo reveals that he has been studying the sun spots already, which the Little Monk had guessed by his poor eyesight. Galileo considers aloud whether to write his research in the common language (instead of Latin) so that it would be available to the masses. Ludovico excuses himself without seeing Virginia again, with whom his engagement is implicitly broken.

Analysis

The discussion of the astrological signs for Galileo Galilei's daughter Virginia and her fiancé Ludovico reflects one of the principal uses for astronomy since antiquity; Virginia and the Galilei's housekeeper Mrs. Sarti are once again cast as the traditional, pious Christians who counter Galileo and his astronomers. The news that Cardinal Barberini is expected to succeed the current, dying Pope provides some hope for Galileo since Galileo was already acquainted with Barberini and knew him to be more receptive to scientific research than many of the other high-ranking clergy (as in Scene 6). Galileo anticipates that he can return to research without punishment for heresy. Brecht shows Galileo doing this at the expense of his daughter's happiness and future marriage, again raising questions about the consequences that the scientific pursuit of truth has on regular people.

Ludovico's argument against Galileo's research is couched in terms similar to the Little Monk's in Scene 6, except that Ludovico is not solely concerned for the good of the common people. He suggests that Galileo's research disrupts the lives of the common people, but his concern is for the stability of both the social order and his financial security, both of which depend on the common people.

Scene 9

Summary

Several years later, in 1632, Galileo Galilei's theories have spread so far throughout Italy that they are a subject of discussion and song among common people in the marketplace. A Ballad Singer and his Wife sing about Galileo's theories and directly discuss their impact on the common people, while various other characters mill about on the stage.

Analysis

This scene serves as a turning point in the play. Galileo Galilei's discoveries have reached such an extent that they are a subject of conversation in everyday life. The Ballad Singer says that independent spirits spread like foul diseases and indicates that the world order will be upturned if everyone searches for the kind of knowledge that Galileo is spreading. Brecht's analysis is concerned with the impact of Galileo's scientific discoveries on the popular world.

Scene 10

Summary

In 1632, at the Medicean palace in Florence, Galileo and his daughter Virginia wait to see Galileo's patron and former student, the Florentine Prince Cosimo II. The rector of the university passes them as he leaves the chamber, but he only slightly acknowledges the two. The Florentine iron founder, Matti, comes down the stairs next and stops to talk to them, professing his support for Galileo's theories and lumping them in with several movements and ideas that are subversive to the Catholic Church and the social structure of Italy.

After Matti leaves, Galileo complains that proponents of such ideas "claim me as their spiritual leader," even though his science has little to do with their revolutionary ideas. The prince's Lord Chamberlain approaches Galileo and Virginia, and Galileo begins to say that he will dedicate his new book to the prince, but the Lord Chamberlain cuts him off, does not accept the book, and walks away. As he leaves, Lord Chamberlain informs Galileo that the prince will no longer protect Galileo by opposing an interrogation request from the Inquisitor, the man charged by the Pope to investigate heresy.

Analysis

In this scene, the characters' social and ecclesiastical positions influence their reception of Galileo's work. The rector of the university passes by Galileo and Virgina in a discourteous way, not even pausing to greet them. Likewise, Prince Cosimo II, via the Lord Chamberlain,

refuses to take Galileo's new book and will not even grant them an audience to discuss it. They are both part of a Catholic reaction against Galileo's work and the challenges it presented to the Biblical description of the cosmos; the fact that both of these characters refuse to be associated with Galileo signals to the reader that this is an institutionally motivated refusal, not a personal disagreement.

At the same time, the iron founder Matti, whose engagement in what was considered a less respectable trade defined him as lower class, is overly enthusiastic about Galileo's work. Yet even Galileo recognizes that Matti (and by implication other progressive thinkers) is less interested in his science and more interested in social change. Matti's effusive speech shows that Galileo's research has come to be contested for its socio-political effects as much as for its challenges to Church doctrine. The Lord Chamberlain's indication that the Prince will not protect Galileo from the papal inquisitor foreshadows a further, more threatening confrontation with the Catholic clergy.

Scene 11

Summary

In the Vatican, Cardinal Barberini, now Pope Urban VIII, converses with the papal Inquisitor, who is tasked with investigating heresies. They discuss the potential interrogation of Galileo. The Pope is at first defensive of Galileo, but the Inquisitor's arguments slowly convince him that the security and stability of the Catholic Church require Galileo to refute his previous teachings. By the end of the scene, Pope Urban VIII has agreed to the Inquisitor's plan to interrogate Galileo, but he dictates that Galileo must not be tortured in order to convince him to recant: "At the very most, he may be shown the instruments." The Inquisitor tells the Pope that seeing the instruments will be enough, since "Mr. Galilei understands machinery."

Analysis

Cardinal Barberini (now Pope Urban VIII) appeared previously in Scene 6, where (while still Cardinal) he had a friendly debate with Galileo about his discoveries. However, Barberini was in fact sent, along with his colleague Cardinal Bellarmin, to communicate a papal decree that the Copernican concept of a heliocentric universe was considered heresy, and Galileo was reprimanded to stop his teachings that promoted this idea. The historical mathematician Cardinal Barberini (1568–1644), a correspondent and friend of Galileo, is presented

by Brecht as subsumed beneath the weighty responsibilities of the papacy. Even though he personally supports scientific research, he allows the needs of the Church to control his decision.

Scene 12

Summary

On June 22, 1633, Galileo's assistants, the Little Monk, Federzoni, and Andrea Sarti, wait for news about Galileo in the gardens of the Florentine Ambassador in Rome. Galileo's daughter Virginia prays in a corner. Galileo has been taken away by the papal Inquisitor who is investigating whether his theories and discoveries constitute heresy according to the Catholic Church. The assistants trade rumours and gossip regarding what is happening to Galileo and argue about whether he will recant his teachings. The Informer, a man who has given information to the investigation, arrives and tells them that Galileo has written a recantation that will be read publicly at five o'clock. The predicted time passes with no announcement, and the assistants rejoice. Soon, however, the bell of St. Marcus begins to ring, and a town crier reads out the words of Galileo's recantation. Galileo has entered the gardens, changed and unrecognizable. The assistants see him and react to his presence with anger and unhappiness, refusing to acknowledge him.

Analysis

In 1633, the historical Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) was brought to Rome to be interrogated by the Inquisition. The papal commission determined that Galileo's 1632 book *Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo, tolemaico e copernicano* (*Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems, Ptolemaic and Copernican*), which Brecht has him try to dedicate to the prince of Florence Cosimo II (Cosimo de Medici) in Scene 10, treats the heretical Copernican theory of a heliocentric universe as fact. In order to avoid torture or death, Galileo agreed to recant his teachings publicly.

Brecht's interpretation of this historical event focuses on the choice that Galileo had to make between defending the scientific truth and saving his own life. Brecht presents Galileo's self-preservation as a betrayal of his quest for truth. The assistants are joyful when they think Galileo has refused to recant: "Man is constant in the face of death," but agonized when they hear his public recantation: "I can't look at him, tell him to go away." Galileo's only line in the scene shifts the blame to power structures that have forced his disavowal. When Andrea says,

“Unhappy is the land that breeds no hero,” Galileo responds, “No, Andrea, 'Unhappy is the land that needs a hero.” Brecht’s take on this moment raises the issue of who is responsible for the stifling of truth; maybe it is the duty of heroes to die for their truth, but wouldn’t it be better to live in a society where such heroes were not needed because the truth was allowed?

Scene 13

Summary

In a country house near Florence sometime in the years 1633–42, when Galileo was a prisoner of the Inquisition, a peasant delivers a goose to the house where Galileo lives with his daughter Virginia. Virginia notices that Galileo’s eyesight is getting worse, as he has difficulty recognizing the goose. Galileo, she says, dictates all of his research to her, and the papacy watches his teachings carefully. The Vatican allows him to continue his research but limits it to appropriate topics.

His former assistant Andrea Sarti stops by to visit him but reveals his continued displeasure with Galileo’s recantation. Andrea claims that not a single innovative paper has been written in Italy since Galileo’s recantation and that science in other countries has also slowed. Galileo asks Virginia to leave the room and reveals to Andrea that he has finished a treatise called the *Discorsi*. Galileo gives the treatise to Andrea to smuggle out of Italy. Andrea concludes that Galileo was planning ahead when he recanted, gaining more time to research, even if publicly disavowed his previous work. Galileo indicates that he was simply afraid of the torture and that his recantation was not a plan, expressing regret for “betraying” science by recanting.

Analysis

Brecht depicts Galileo as a ruined man after his recantation. Here, after years of living under virtual house arrest, with his research closely scrutinized, Brecht portrays a slightly changed Galileo. The astronomer’s continued research puts at risk the very life his recantation saved, and his conversation with Andrea shows that he regrets the weakness that allowed him to recant what he knew to be true. Brecht positions Galileo’s continued research and his desire to pass it to Andrea as a small redemption, as Andrea seems to do. Galileo says that he “must not be tolerated among the ranks of science,” while Andrea counters, “I cannot think that your savage analysis is the last word.” Virginia, meanwhile, represents the opinion of the Church, saying that Galileo’s recantation means that he is “accepted in the ranks of the faithful.” The full title of the new treatise is *Discorsi e dimostrazioni matematiche intorno a due nuove scienze*

attenenti alla meccanica (*Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences*). It was published in 1638 in the Netherlands.

Scene 14

Summary

At the Italian border, Andrea presents himself to the customs officers. While they examine his documents and belongings, Andrea chats with a boy who is preparing to torment an old woman whom he thinks is a witch. Andrea questions the boy for evidence that the woman is truly a witch and is able to counter each of the boy's arguments with a logical and reasoned explanation. Finally, Andrea lifts the boy to the window to look in and see with his own eyes that the shadow of a broomstick he saw is really just the shadow of the ladle the woman is using to stir her pot of porridge. The customs officers return Andrea's documents, and the boy continues his tormenting of the woman shouting, "She *is* a witch!" Andrea tells the boy to think it over and goes on his way.

Analysis

Brecht's play closes with Andrea smuggling Galileo's recent book the *Discorsi,* which he finished while under papal house arrest in Florence, out of Italy for publication in a country where the Catholic Church holds less power. Andrea is now in charge of guarding the future of science. Despite his recantations, Galileo makes one last attempt to speak the truth of what he has observed. The discussion between Andrea and the boy about the old woman parallels the main conflict of the play. In a scene that is much like the Allegory of the Cave in Plato's *The Republic*, the boy believes in what is represented by shadows and what he is told by others. The boy does not question or search for the truth with his own observations. Andrea lifts the boy up to the window to show him that the shadow he sees is not the truth, but that he may find the truth simply by looking for it with his own eyes. The boy sees the ladle that casts the shadow but he interpreted it as a broomstick echoes the Allegory of the Cave's revelation that when people turn around they see that it is people who are casting the shadows that they thought were reality.

UNIT – 14

UNIT 14 (A): THE CHARACTER OF GALILEO GALILEI –

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) is the protagonist of the play, based on the historical figure of the famous astronomer by the same name who wrote treatises about the structure of the cosmos but recanted his teachings under pressure from the Church. He is a lecturer at Padua University, where he specializes in using mathematics to prove astronomical models. Galileo is a robust man, full of energy and endowed with a contrarian nature. He is also a talented and engaging teacher with a knack for making complicated topics easy to understand. Though he is a devout Catholic, Galileo likes to question things, which makes him a problem for the Catholic Church. The primary object of his questioning is the Aristotelian model, a centuries old doctrine that says that the Earth exists at the centre of the universe. Galileo is frustrated and even frightened by the Church's censure of the Copernican-leaning aspects of his theories. Galileo instead holds to Copernicus' model which places the sun at the centre of the solar system with the Earth revolving around it. As the story unfolds, Galileo finds himself able to prove unequivocally that Copernicus was right, but he faces the difficult task of convincing the Church that centuries of religious teachings were wrong. Twice in the story, Galileo publicly acquiesces to the mandates of the Church while privately continuing his research. Galileo's assistants view his recantation as weak and as a betrayal of science while his continued research offers redemption.

The most interesting aspect of the play is the characterization of Galileo which is complex and multifaceted. Galileo is portrayed, from the very beginning of the play, as a brilliant and ambitious scientist who is driven by a relentless curiosity about the natural world. He possesses a sharp intellect and a keen observational eye, as demonstrated by his invention of the telescope and his groundbreaking discoveries regarding the heliocentric model of the solar system. Galileo's thirst for knowledge and his unwavering commitment to the pursuit of truth make him an inspiring figure in the play. He relentlessly searches for the truth while remaining self-interested and focused on maintaining his quality of life by selling his designs and flattering potential patrons.

Galileo's character is not without flaws. One of the central tensions in his character is his desire for personal success and his responsibility to share his discoveries with the world. As the play progresses, Galileo finds himself torn between his scientific integrity and the pressure from the Catholic Church which threatens him with persecution and censure if he continues to promote

his heliocentric ideas. This conflict forces Galileo to compromise his principles and renounce his scientific beliefs to protect himself. Galileo's character reflects the complexities of human nature and the compromises individuals make in the face of adversity. While his initial motivation is the pursuit of truth and the advancement of knowledge, his fear of persecution and desire for personal safety ultimately lead him to compromise his ideals. This portrayal highlights the moral dilemmas faced by scientists and intellectuals under oppressive regimes. Critics argue that Galileo's character is an embodiment of the struggles between intellectual freedom and oppressive authority. His decision to recant his scientific findings is seen by many as a betrayal of his own principles and a missed opportunity to challenge the dominant power structures. Others argue that his compromise is a pragmatic choice to ensure his own survival and continue his scientific work behind closed doors.

Brecht's characterization of Galileo is a compelling portrayal that captures the complexity of the historical figure while aligning with Brecht's own dramatic principles. Brecht's approach to character development aims to provoke critical thinking and engage the audience in a dialectical exploration of social and political themes. Here are some key aspects of Galileo's characterization by Brecht:

i. Contradictory Nature: Galileo is presented as a character with conflicting qualities and motivations. He possesses immense intellectual curiosity and a passion for scientific discovery, yet he is also driven by personal ambition and a desire for recognition. Brecht highlights Galileo's contradictions to challenge simplistic views of historical figures and to emphasize the complex social forces at play in their actions.

ii. Human Fallibility: Brecht's Galileo is not a flawless hero but a flawed human being. He succumbs to fear and self-interest, compromising his principles and betraying his scientific beliefs when faced with the threat of persecution. Brecht presents Galileo's weaknesses to illustrate the impact of external pressures on individuals and to prompt the audience to question the choices made by those in positions of influence.

iii. Intellectual Courage and Skepticism: Despite his compromises, Galileo is depicted as a figure who possesses intellectual courage and skepticism. He questions established authority and challenges traditional beliefs, advocating for the pursuit of knowledge and the scientific

method. Brecht portrays Galileo as a catalyst for intellectual awakening, encouraging the audience to question their own assumptions and societal norms.

iv. Didactic Function: Brecht's characterization of Galileo serves a didactic purpose. Galileo's experiences and conflicts reflect broader social and political issues of the time, such as the clash between scientific progress and religious dogma. By presenting Galileo's journey as a symbol of the struggle for intellectual freedom, Brecht aims to educate the audience about the dangers of conformism and the importance of critical thinking.

v. Epic Theatre Techniques: Brecht employs epic theatre techniques, such as the use of distancing effects, to distance the audience emotionally from the character of Galileo. This intentional detachment prevents identification with Galileo and encourages critical analysis of his actions. Brecht aims to create an active and critical spectator who can examine the choices made by Galileo in a broader socio-political context.

Overall, Brecht's characterization of Galileo reflects his larger dramatic objectives of challenging conventional narratives, promoting critical consciousness, and provoking social and political reflection. It is a complex portrayal of a brilliant scientist grappling with the moral and ethical challenges of his time. He represents the tension between the pursuit of knowledge and the constraints imposed by societal and political forces. While Galileo's character is subject to criticism for his compromises, his portrayal also invites reflection on the difficult choices individuals face when their ideals clash with the realities of the world around them. By portraying Galileo as a flawed yet intellectually courageous figure, Brecht encourages the audience to consider the complex ethical dilemmas faced by individuals in positions of power and to reflect on the broader implications of their choices. The play is composed in such a way that it hinders the audience from empathizing with the character of Galileo and instead makes them think objectively about the arguments of all characters and draw their own conclusions from them. Brecht represents the character of Galileo with all his flaws and weakness of the human race rather than portraying a sublime heroic character.

UNIT 14 (B): THE CHARACTER OF VIRGINIA GALILEI

Virginia is the young and naive daughter of Galileo Galilei. She is loyal and caring to her father, regardless of the many ways that his actions negatively affect her throughout the play. Virginia is also loyal and faithful to the Catholic Church, no matter how her father's theories challenge its principles. Despite the presence of a Pope, multiple cardinals, and other religious figures, she is the most devoted follower of Catholicism in *Life of Galileo* and can often be seen praying. She loves her father but sees his work in science as misguided. When the Inquisition questions her about him, she has no sense of what danger she might be putting Galileo in. Virginia becomes engaged to Ludovico Marsili and looks forward to her impending nuptials. She has an emotional attachment to Ludovico and is disappointed by their broken engagement, which results in her continued role as a companion and caretaker for her father as he reaches old age.

Virginia appears as a significant figure who contributes to the dramatic development and themes of the play. Although her role is relatively limited compared to Galileo, she provides a contrasting perspective and represents a voice of morality and compassion in the face of her father's compromises. Virginia is depicted as a compassionate and empathetic character, deeply concerned with the suffering and injustices she witnesses. She showcases a strong moral compass and a sense of social responsibility, contrasting with Galileo's more pragmatic approach. Virginia's character serves as a reminder of the humanistic values that should guide scientific progress and challenge the oppressive structures of power.

Virginia's relationship with her father is complex. She both admires and loves him, yet she becomes disillusioned and critical of his choices when she witnesses the detrimental effects of his compromises. Her character serves as a moral anchor, questioning the ethical implications of Galileo's actions and highlighting the potential conflicts between personal ambition and social responsibility.

Furthermore, Virginia's character symbolizes the role of women in society during that historical period. Brecht portrays her as an intelligent and thoughtful woman who is denied opportunities for education and intellectual development due to societal norms. Her character reflects the limitations placed on women's aspirations and their exclusion from scientific and intellectual circles. Virginia's presence in the play also underscores the emotional and personal consequences of Galileo's actions. Through her character, Brecht explores the human cost of making choices in a politically oppressive environment, emphasizing the weight of personal sacrifices and the toll they take on individuals and their relationships.

In summary, Virginia Galilei in Brecht's play, represents a moral compass, highlighting the ethical dilemmas faced by individuals in positions of power. Her compassionate and empathetic nature serves as a counterbalance to Galileo's pragmatism and ambition, while also shedding light on the limitations placed on women in society. Virginia's character adds depth and complexity to the play, underscoring the humanistic concerns and the personal consequences of societal conflicts.

UNIT 14 (C): FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP IN THE PLAY

The father-daughter relationship between Galileo and Virginia Galilei in Bertolt Brecht's play *Galileo* is a significant dynamic that contributes to the emotional and thematic depth of the narrative. It highlights various aspects of their relationship, including love, admiration, conflict, and disillusionment.

Here are some key points regarding their father-daughter bond:

Admiration and Love: At the beginning of the play, Virginia looks up to her father with deep admiration and love. She recognizes his brilliance and is proud of his accomplishments as a scientist. This admiration stems from her appreciation of his intellect and the way he challenges the status quo. Galileo, in turn, sees Virginia as a source of support and inspiration for his work.

Intellectual Influence: Galileo's passion for knowledge and scientific discovery has a profound impact on Virginia. His pursuit of truth and willingness to challenge conventional wisdom inspire her own intellectual curiosity.

Conflict and Disillusionment: As the play progresses, Virginia experiences a conflict between her love for her father and her growing disillusionment with his compromises. She becomes aware of the detrimental effects of Galileo's actions, such as his recantation of his scientific findings under pressure from the Church. Galileo's decision to recant his scientific findings under pressure from the Church deeply affects Virginia. Her relationship with Ludovico gets sacrificed due to her father’s stubbornness. She feels betrayed and disappointed by his willingness to sacrifice his daughter’s happiness even. This conflict strains their relationship,

and Virginia becomes critical of her father's choices, ultimately distancing herself emotionally from him.

Moral Anchor: Virginia serves as a moral anchor in the play, questioning the ethical implications of Galileo's decisions. Her compassion and concern for human suffering provide a contrasting perspective to Galileo's pragmatism and ambition. Virginia's character underscores the moral and social responsibilities that come with intellectual pursuits.

Emotional Impact: The emotional impact of this strained relationship is palpable. The strained relationship between Galileo and Virginia demonstrates the emotional toll that Galileo's compromises and their subsequent fallout have on their familial bond. Their conflicting viewpoints and the choices Galileo makes under pressure create a sense of tension and distance between them. The audience witnesses the heartbreaking distance that grows between them as Virginia becomes more disillusioned. This emotional aspect adds depth to the play, evoking empathy and inviting reflection on the personal costs of challenging the status quo.

The father-daughter relationship in *Galileo* represents the broader theme of personal sacrifices and the ethical dilemmas faced by individuals in oppressive environments. It highlights the emotional complexities that arise when one's ideals clash with the realities of societal and political pressures. Through the portrayal of Galileo and Virginia's relationship, Brecht prompts the audience to reflect on the cost of pursuing knowledge and the consequences it can have on personal relationships. The conflict between them conflict highlights the tension between personal ambition and ethical responsibility. Galileo's compromises demonstrate the difficult choices individuals face when their pursuit of knowledge clashes with societal pressures. Virginia serves as a moral compass, challenging her father's decisions and emphasizing the importance of social and ethical considerations alongside intellectual pursuits.

Critics argue that the relationship between Galileo and Virginia serves as a microcosm of the broader social and political conflicts depicted in the play. It symbolizes the tensions between scientific progress and institutional control, personal ambition and moral responsibility. Through their relationship, Brecht explores the human consequences of navigating these conflicts and the potential alienation that can arise when individuals make compromises in the face of oppressive forces. Overall, the relationship between Galileo and Virginia in the play offers a critical exploration of the sacrifices and conflicts that arise when personal convictions

collide with the demands of society. It underscores the ethical dilemmas faced by intellectuals and the emotional toll that such conflicts can have on personal relationships.

UNIT – 15

UNIT 15 (A): HISTORICAL GALILEO VERSUS BRECHT'S GALILEO – A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Historical Context of *Galileo* – *Life of Galileo* can be said to take place at two times. The first is the time in which the play is set (Galileo's Italy in the 1600s), and the second is the time in which the play was written (Brecht's Europe in the 1930s). The two hold striking similarities. In Galileo's time, new scientific ideas were emerging that challenged centuries of religious understanding of the world. In Brecht's time, new political systems were coming to power in the form of fascism and communism. Like the scientific knowledge of Galileo's day, the political changes in Brecht's day were met with extreme resistance. Two facets of sixteenth-century Italy are important to the understanding *Life of Galileo*. The first is the omnipresence of the Inquisition, a kind of religious police force first founded in medieval times to investigate charges of witchcraft and re-established in Galileo's day to protect against the rise of Protestantism. The Inquisition had extensive power in the Church and could bring people to trial (and punish them) at will. The second facet, not unrelated, is the importance of Aristotle's works to scientific knowledge at the time. Aristotle believed in a universe where the Sun and all other heavenly bodies revolved around the Earth. In turn, the Church accepted and promoted this belief. Others, most importantly Copernicus, had promoted the heliocentric model (of the Earth revolving around the Sun) with virtually no success, and sometimes at the risk of their own lives. Challenging Aristotle became a type of heresy: something the Inquisition would be very much involved in. Indeed, the trial of Galileo is likely the most famous of the Inquisition's undertakings. The rise of fascism specifically refers to the ascension of Hitler to the chancellorship of Germany just prior to World War II as well as the coming to power of fascist leaders in Italy and Japan. With Hitler's rise the ability to speak out against the government became increasingly difficult, even illegal. At the same time, it became clear that a Europe already badly wearied by the events of World War I would soon be plunged into another global

conflict. Some world leaders, such as Neville Chamberlain, attempted to stave this off by appeasing Hitler, but to no avail. It was a time of tumultuous change.

Life of Galileo is a historical drama — that is, a work of literature which is based upon real events or people of the past. The play is organized around the major events in the life of the real historical figure of the famous astronomer Galileo Galilei. (Several other historical figures also make appearances in the play, such as Christopher Clavius, Chief Astronomer to the Papal College of Rome, and Cardinal Barberini, who becomes Pope Urban VIII. However, while these personages and the events in which they participate are historical, the majority of their dialogue, interactions, and personalities were created by Brecht in the writing of this play. Historical dramas typically utilize sets, clothing, characters, and even speech patterns that are in keeping with the depicted period. Brecht's stage directions and dialogue even make use of historical records, including documents like Galileo's written recantation and other decrees, to increase the semblance of historical veracity. However, the *Life of Galileo*, like all historical drama, is a creative work that reflects the era in which it was written at least as much as it reflects the era it depicts. Brecht selects only the elements of history that suit the story he desires to tell, creates personalities for his characters that are not necessarily reflected in historical sources, and crafts dialogue that conveys themes and meanings that are relevant to his own time. The life of Brecht's character Galileo does map onto that of the historical Galileo, but it is worth considering where and how Brecht uses history for his own purposes.

Nazi Germany and the First Edition of *Life of Galileo* (1943) –

Brecht first composed the *Life of Galileo* in 1938 in Denmark. He was living in exile from his native Germany at the time because the Nazi regime saw his politically oriented plays as a threat. In the aftermath of World War I, Brecht was particularly drawn to the teachings of Karl Marx and his communist ideology that spurred uprisings across Germany; the Nazi government sought to abolish communism in favour of a nationalist and populist ruling party. Brecht, who was involved in theatrical productions in Berlin in the post-WWI period, was forced to flee Germany in 1933. While he was in exile, the Nazi party revoked his citizenship and burned his "subversive" books. Brecht's *Life of Galileo* takes on the issue of censorship in an overt manner. In the same way that Brecht's life was threatened and his writings condemned, Galileo faced persecution and death as well as the obstruction and destruction of his research. Brecht's play raises questions about the right to research and speak freely, as well as the responsibility of scholars to stand up to oppressive regimes. In this respect, the play is tightly connected with

Brecht's essay "Writing the Truth: Five Difficulties" (1935), which analyzes the challenges for writers living under Fascism.

The Atomic Bomb and the Second "American" Edition of the *Life of Galileo* (1947) –

Brecht immigrated to the United States in 1941, where he was residing when the *Life of Galileo* was first performed in Germany in 1943. However, with the end of World War II came the world-changing use of the atomic bomb. As Brecht wrote in the preamble to his second and so-called American version of the play (1947), "The atomic age made its debut at Hiroshima in the middle of our work. Overnight the biography of the founder of the new system of physics read differently." For Brecht, the catastrophic consequences of science performed without thought for its consequences took on a new meaning and, for some theatregoers and critics, became the central concern of the *Life of Galileo*. Brecht also commented, "The atom bomb...is the classical end product of [Galileo's] contribution to science and his failure to society."

However, the changes that Brecht made to the play (in collaboration with his translator Charles Laughton, who also starred as Galileo in a production of the play) are related to a few key scenes and speeches. The first version focused on arguing for the freedom to research and teaches as one saw fit. In this second version, some of the speeches that most evoked this theme were removed and the collaborators reinforced and sometimes inserted dialogue that raised questions about the moral responsibility of the scientist to society. In this *Galileo II*, as it is sometimes called to distinguish it from the 1938 edition (*Galileo I*), both themes are present and significant. With slight modifications, the historical drama is again made to speak to the concerns of contemporary society.

The Berliner Ensemble, Marxism, and the Third *Life of Galileo* (1955) –

In 1947, Brecht fled the United States after testifying before the House Un-American Activities Committee that was investigating communist activity in the United States. Brecht's Marxist politics were not welcome in the United States, and after working in theatre in Zurich, he returned to Berlin in 1949 to live in the socialist republic of East Germany. There, Brecht and his wife Helene Weigel founded a politically engaged theatrical company called the *Berliner Ensemble*. In this context, and during the tensions of the Cold War (1947–91), Brecht reworked the play a third time (1955), incorporating elements of *Galileo I* and *Galileo II* and adding others. The world had changed so significantly that a new historical drama was needed to

address contemporary concerns. Moreover, one new parallel between Brecht and Galileo had arisen in the intervening years. When the House Un-American Activities Committee interrogated Brecht as to whether he had ever applied to be a member of the Communist Party, he forcefully denied it. Brecht and Galileo both devoted their life's work to speaking the truth, even against reigning powers. Galileo recanted to save himself; Brecht denied (perhaps truthfully) any official affiliation with a set of principles that guided his political beliefs and artistic production for the majority of his life.

UNIT 15 (B): THE MORAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCIENTIST

"Science has only one commandment: contribution. And you have contributed more than any man for a hundred years" (Scene 13).

Andrea says this when he finds out that Galileo has continued his work. He apologises for previously speaking ill of him. He lifts Galileo's spirit by pointing out that his contribution to science matters more than his weakness in the face of the Inquisition.

In Brecht's *Life of Galileo*, the famous astronomer and the title character Galileo embodies the pursuit of the truth and the advancement of scientific knowledge. He is driven by curiosity and a desire to uncover the realities of the universe. Brecht emphasizes the scientist's responsibility to seek and pursue the truth relentlessly. Galileo is driven by his curiosity and commitment to uncovering the realities of the universe. This pursuit of truth reflects the scientist's duty to challenge prevailing beliefs, question established norms, and contribute to the advancement of knowledge. From a moral standpoint, Galileo's commitment to seeking truth can be seen as a positive attribute. It highlights the responsibility of scientists to challenge established beliefs and contribute to the progress of human understanding. However, he frequently demonstrates a lack of concern for the impact of his discoveries on other people. In Scene 4, when Galileo is presenting his telescope and its discoveries to the Florentine court, the philosopher asks Galileo to consider where his research is leading. Galileo poses a question in return, "Are we, as scholars, concerned with where the truth might lead us?" Aghast, the philosopher responds, "Mr. Galilei, the truth might lead us anywhere!"

Throughout the play, Galileo faces ethical dilemmas that shed light on the moral responsibility of scientists. For example, when pressured by the Church to renounce his discoveries, Galileo must decide whether to prioritize his personal safety or continue advocating for scientific truth. This raises questions about the balance between individual well-being and the greater good, as well as the ethical choices scientists may face in their pursuit of knowledge. But Brecht's Galileo prioritizes the pursuit of scientific truth above everything except his own survival. While other characters express concern for the impact of his research, calling him "the Bible-killer" or pondering the breakdown of the socio-political structure, Galileo pushes his research onward. He does not even concern himself with the impact of his work on his own daughter, whose future marital happiness he casually sacrifices by refusing Ludovico's request that he must stop his research. The play also discusses the sacrifices a scientist has to make in their personal life in order to bring progress to the society. Although, at the end of the play, Galileo succeeds in finishing his work, he is imprisoned in his home and forced to do things against his will.

The play underscores the importance of the scientist's moral responsibility to challenge authority and question oppressive power structures. Galileo faces pressure from the Catholic Church to renounce his discoveries, but he demonstrates courage by standing up for scientific truth and resisting censorship. Brecht suggests that scientists have a responsibility to resist undue influence and uphold the integrity of their work, even if it means facing consequences. Galileo's interactions with powerful figures, such as the Medici rulers and the Catholic Church, underscore the complexities of a scientist's social responsibility. Galileo seeks financial support from the ruling class to continue his scientific work, but this collaboration comes with compromises. He must navigate the expectations and demands of those in power, which raises questions about the extent to which scientists should engage with or challenge existing power structures.

The play highlights the scientist's duty to share knowledge and contribute to the betterment of society. Galileo's discoveries have profound implications, and his suppression by the Church leads to the restriction of scientific knowledge. Brecht suggests that scientists have a responsibility to disseminate their findings, promote education, and strive for the common good, even in the face of resistance or opposition. The play also prompts reflection on the responsibility scientists have for the potential consequences and applications of their discoveries. The play indirectly suggests that scientists have a responsibility to be accountable

for the consequences of their actions. Galileo's regrets regarding the military applications of his telescope demonstrate the need for scientists to reflect on the broader implications of their research and consider the potential harm it may cause. This implies a responsibility to actively engage in ethical deliberation and take responsibility for the societal consequences of their work.

Galileo's work on the telescope, for instance, has military implications, which he comes to regret when he witnesses the devastating effects of war. This highlights the need for scientists to consider the broader societal impact of their research and to be mindful of the ethical implications of how their findings might be used. Galileo's discoveries and subsequent censorship have significant societal implications. The play explores the consequences of suppressing scientific knowledge and the potential harm caused by restricting access to information. This raises the question of the social responsibility of scientists to share their findings and contribute to the betterment of society, even if it means challenging established norms or facing backlash.

The play explores the extent to which Galileo takes responsibility for the impact of his discoveries. He is so involved with finishing his work that he does not stop to consider what it might mean for the people in his life and how it can affect humanity as a whole. Brecht's play asks the reader to consider whether the scientist should have a social and moral responsibility to consider the consequences of his research. Although first composed in 1938 in Denmark, the version of the play most commonly read in English is the second, 1947 edition; this edition contains small revisions made in the wake of the end of World War II (1939–45). As Brecht puts it, "Galileo's crime can be regarded as the original sin of modern physical science. ... The atomic bomb, both as a technical and social phenomenon, is the classical end product of his contribution to science and his failure to society." After the consequences of the Atomic bomb during World War II, the playwright poses the question of whether scientists are responsible for all the impact of their work on society. *Life of Galileo* challenges the reader to consider whether the scientist is responsible for the consequences of his discoveries, even the unintended ones.

Overall, Brecht's *Galileo* presents a nuanced exploration of the moral and social responsibility of scientists. It emphasizes the importance of pursuing truth while grappling with the ethical dilemmas and societal implications that arise. By examining Galileo's choices and the

consequences of his actions, the play encourages critical evaluation of the role scientists play in society and the moral considerations they face in their pursuit of knowledge.

UNIT 15 (C): TREATMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC IDEAS AS A CONTAGIOUS INFECTION

The deadly Bubonic Plague ripped through Italy during Galileo's life, and in Brecht's time, hundreds of years later, an influenza outbreak gripped the entire world. Not surprisingly, the idea of contagion looms large in *Life of Galileo*, and it becomes a metaphor for the way in which powerful institutions try to stem the flow of ideas that challenge their authority. Thus, *Life of Galileo* positions ideas as a kind of contagion, and shows that attempts to keep people from coming into contact with knowledge are repressive and ultimately ineffective. Just like viruses, ideas tend to spread quickly and uncontrollably to others.

The question of what knowledge individuals should possess is a recurrent issue throughout *Life of Galileo*. For example, in Scene 5, when Galileo is in Rome and the Church is evaluating the accuracy of his telescopic observations, the astronomer argues with various clergymen who quote scripture that counters his research. The infuriated Monk says that "...man can't be expected to understand everything!" Later, in Scene 7, the Little Monk argues that peasants should not know that Galileo's research is refuting the words of the Bible as they would lose all faith and have no purpose in life. The nobleman Ludovico is likewise concerned with the structure of society when, in Scene 8, he cautions Galileo not to continue with his research. In Ludovico's opinion, the farmers cannot understand the finer points of astronomy, but having little knowledge would disrupt their religious beliefs and consequently destabilize the entire productive economy.

Galileo lands squarely on the opposite side of the subject from all three of these characters. He believes that man can and should learn the truth about everything through careful observations and a scientific approach. Moreover, he believes that this knowledge should be available to all, so much so that he insists that the Florentine court philosopher refrains from speaking in Latin so that all present (in particular Galileo's assistant, the lens grinder Federzoni) can understand the discussion. He even begins to write his books in the common language instead of the

traditional scholarly Latin in order to make them accessible to all. The Ballad Singer and his Wife in Scene 9 sell Galileo's pamphlets for two centesimi (2 cents) each in the marketplace. However, it is worth considering that Galileo is unable to mount a strong defence to any of the arguments put forth by the infuriated Monk, the Little Monk, or Ludovico. Brecht's Galileo believes knowledge should be the possession of all in society, but he is unable to effectively argue why possessing that knowledge will not have negative effects on society, or even why the possession of that knowledge would be more important than its potentially negative effects.

Because of the Church's authority, people tend to recoil from Galileo's ideas just as they would flee from the plague. For example, when Galileo's housekeeper (Mrs. Sarti) is discovered to have contracted the plague, the townsfolk run past Galileo's home, whispering in fear and refusing to answer him when he speaks to them because they are afraid of catching the disease. Similarly, when they pass by him in the hall of the Inquisition, they refuse to greet him lest they be seen as supporting his ideas. Brecht strengthens this parallel through the minstrel performances. The plague inspired travelling minstrel performers to depict those suffering from the disease, and the minstrels in *Life of Galileo* also sing songs about how horrible Galileo is.

Yet, once someone begins to understand Galileo's new knowledge, they start instantly to spread it—as the housekeeper's son, Andrea, does. The second that Andrea begins to learn that the sun does not revolve around the Earth, he starts to teach it to his mother. Later, he does the same for Cosimo, the Grand Duke of Florence. Galileo's lens grinder, Federzoni, is no different. Though he has been only recently exposed to Galileo's new ideas, he quickly presents them to a group of government astronomers and physicists who are amazed at his impertinence. Even those who should be strongly immune to his message, such as the Little Monk, fall under the sway of the "disease." The Little Monk is classically educated in philosophy and religion and he has Church-approved knowledge in mathematics. These should work as "antibodies" to Galileo's "virus." Indeed, it seems that the Little Monk hopes to cure Galileo of his infection by using these resources. Nevertheless, being in Galileo's presence for only a short time is enough to infect the Little Monk.

At the heart of Galileo's ideas is the premise that one must question everything. This is, even more than his specific questioning of Aristotle, is the core of Galileo's infection. As the Inquisitor points out to Barberini, Galileo has caused a veritable plague of doubting within Italy and elsewhere. The idea that the Church was wrong about one of its most central beliefs has

caused many to doubt its other doctrines, and perhaps even faith itself. Since Galileo, for instance, sea captains have begun to place their belief in star charts and compasses rather than God. The minstrel singers of the plague suggest that such questioning has extended even further into the realm of social life. After becoming infected with Galileo's questioning manner, for instance, tenants now berate their landlords, wives question whether they might achieve sexual satisfaction with men besides their husbands, and apprentices lie in bed rather than working. "Independent spirit," he warns, "spreads like foul diseases."

Like Galileo, Brecht had firm and iconoclastic ideas that he hoped would spread like a contagion. His ideas on the theatre were also an arena that (like Galileo's astronomy) had been dominated for centuries by the theories of Aristotle (in this context, the idea that the theatre should imitate reality as closely as possible). Brecht thought that the theatre could be an amazing tool for encouraging intellectual debate and politicizing the masses, but that the naturalistic style prescribed by Aristotle had limited the theatre's political efficacy. Brecht did not want people to get wrapped up emotionally in his works; instead, he wanted them to think about the plays—to remember that they were a work of artistic artifice and not real life. Like Galileo's infectious ideas, Brecht's ideas on the theatre angered some critics and probably scared them. And they spread. Most serious theatre directors to this day work in the shadow of Brecht—whether in sympathy, in opposition, or in some combination of the two—which shows the continuing ability of Brecht's thought to "infect" others.

UNIT – 16

UNIT 16 (A): SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS VERSUS RELIGIOUS TRADITION / FAITH VERSUS REASON

"The aim of science is not to open the door to infinite wisdom, but to set a limit to infinite error" (Galileo, Scene 9).

Galileo teaches his students this lesson after explaining to them why ice floats on water.

In Bertolt Brecht's play, the conflict between scientific progress and religious faith is a central theme that drives the narrative. The play explores the tension and clashes between these two forces, highlighting the challenges and consequences of challenging religious doctrines in

pursuit of scientific knowledge. The plot of the play revolves around Galileo's struggle to bring progress to a country that is so deep-rooted in age-old tradition that it sees progress as its enemy. The play depicts the opposition Galileo faces from the Catholic Church when he presents his discoveries that challenge the geocentric view of the universe. The Church, representing religious faith, sees Galileo's scientific progress as a threat to its authority and established beliefs. The conflict arises as scientific progress clashes with religious doctrines and the power structures that uphold them. The Church's response to Galileo's discoveries reflects a broader historical pattern of religious institutions suppressing scientific advancements. In the play, the Church resorts to censorship, coercion, and threats to silence Galileo and prevent his ideas from spreading. This illustrates the resistance religious faith can have towards scientific progress and the lengths to which institutions may go to maintain their dogma and control.

Although some of the authorities of the Church, such as the Cardinal Barberini and the scholar Clavius, understand that Galileo's findings are true and important, they refuse to make them known to the world because it would disrupt the traditional beliefs. Tradition gives them power because it keeps the masses ignorant and, therefore, susceptible to the control of the Church. Scientific progress would lead people towards questioning the traditional system, which is something the Church could not allow Galileo to achieve for the survival of their own. However, the play shows that the power of human progress is so strong that it cannot be stopped ultimately. Sooner or later, it will find a way out of the boundaries of tradition.

Additionally, the story of Galileo's scientific progress during the Renaissance period is an allusion to the political changes in 1930s Europe. As a Marxist, Brecht used Galileo's fight to refer to his own opposition to the oppressive power structure. Marx's famously stated, "Religion is the opium of the people". For Brecht, reason was the ultimate weapon to fight against any oppression, be it the Inquisition or a capitalist society. He believed that once the masses see the possibility of progress in a rational way, their uproar against the confines of the old ways would be unstoppable. Both Brecht and Galileo lived in societies that were characterized by the desire to do things differently than it had been done in the past. In Galileo's time, scientific research introduced knowledge and ideas that were at odds with centuries of religious teachings about the nature of the world. In Brecht's day, this desire for change was political. People were tired of wars and the political systems that caused them: they wanted change and some believed that communism could provide it. By staging a play about Galileo's

life in the era of communism's ascendance, Brecht suggests that history will view the struggle for communism in the same favourable light that contemporary people see Galileo's struggle for scientific knowledge against a repressive religious hierarchy.

Brecht believes that even though the newly developed ideas are initially at odds with centuries of tradition but "common sense" will ultimately prevail among the masses and the new ideas will be accepted if those are more rational than the ones they strive to replace. For Galileo, whom Brecht endows with the same belief, proof of this inclination toward rationality can be seen in his ability to show simple demonstrations, made with apples and wooden models, to teach complex ideas. Andrea, who initially lacked the education necessary to understand the mathematics behind Galileo's ideas, was easily convinced by Galileo's models that the Aristotelian concept of the universe made less sense than the Copernican system. That basic inclination toward reason, Galileo says, is found everywhere and it is an irresistible power that will eventually persuade even the most stubborn people of the truth.

Building on this framework, *Life of Galileo* suggests that technological advancement and an increasing trust in empiricism means that human reason can be more easily directed. When Copernicus confronted the ideas of Aristotle, he did so on purely mathematical grounds. If one could not understand the mathematics behind his proofs, then one simply had to take his arguments on faith — precisely what had been done for centuries with Aristotle. Without *observable* proof, Copernicus' arguments remained just a theory. Owing to the innovation of the telescope, however, Galileo could provide visible proof of the phenomena that could otherwise only be described mathematically. While his demonstrations and models were convincing to some, the incontrovertible evidence of the eyes, in the end, was sufficient to persuade all. For Brecht, who sought to prove Marx's theories of communism to his audience, observable proof of communism's viability was found not in a technological advancement, but rather through experiment. The Soviet Union had recently turned the theories of Karl Marx into proof of the viability of communism, and many countries throughout the world sought to replicate their findings.

Brecht makes this parallel concrete when he has his Galileo equate politics and science in an odd speech to a former student. In it, he says that "the poverty of the many is as old as the hills, and from the pulpit and lecture platform we hear that it is as hard as the hills to get rid of." But

the “new art of doubting” that reason has created has caused people to train their telescopes not just on the stars, but also on “their tormentors, the princes, landlords and priests.” And just as ordinary people had used their reason to see the flaws of Aristotle’s time-honoured models, so too would they use reason to see the flaws in the systems of power which had long oppressed them. Those systems, Brecht believed, would in turn be replaced by ones that made more sense for everyone, just as Galileo’s system replaced Aristotle’s.

For Galileo, knowledge really was a power that anyone could wield in the pursuit of a better world. In this way, Brecht uses Galileo as a stand-in for himself: both men present themselves as iconoclasts, standing against centuries of inherited conservatism. Both men make that stand in the name of the common man, whom they understand would benefit the most from this emancipation of ideas. And, perhaps most importantly, both men speak directly towards that audience of ordinary people. Brecht’s fictional Galileo writes all of his scientific tracts in Italian, rather than in Latin, so that people from a variety of backgrounds can read them (the real Galileo did this as well). Similarly, Brecht himself wrote in easy-to-understand German and made sure that English translations of his work were equally accessible. Even his theoretical works on the theatre, which tackle very complex topics, are easy to read.

Overall, Brecht's play *Galileo* explores the conflict between scientific progress and religious faith, showcasing the challenges, consequences, and moral dilemmas that arise when new knowledge challenges deeply held religious beliefs. The play prompts critical reflection on the relationship between science and religion, the role of authority, and the tensions that can emerge when these two forces collide. On one hand, faith and religious tradition represent deeply rooted belief systems that provide moral and spiritual guidance to individuals and communities. They offer a sense of purpose, morality, and community cohesion. These traditions often draw upon sacred texts, rituals, and doctrines that have been passed down through generations, providing a sense of continuity and stability. Faith can bring solace, hope, and a sense of transcendence to believers, offering answers to existential questions and a framework for understanding the world. On the other hand, reason and science prioritize empirical evidence, logic, and critical inquiry as the basis for understanding the world. Scientific progress challenges traditional beliefs and encourages the pursuit of knowledge through experimentation, observation, and analysis. The scientific method seeks to uncover objective truths about the natural world and expand human understanding. Reason and science have led to remarkable advancements in technology, medicine, and our comprehension of the

universe, offering a different way of interpreting reality. Brecht's exploration of this theme in "Galileo" invites audiences to critically reflect on the relationship between faith and reason, the dynamics of power and authority, and the importance of intellectual freedom. It challenges individuals to consider the potential for dialogue, understanding, and synthesis between these seemingly opposing forces. Ultimately, the theme serves as a reminder of the complexity of human beliefs, the need for open-mindedness, and the ongoing quest for knowledge and truth.

UNIT 16 (B): FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND SPEECH VERSUS CENSORSHIP

The matter of freedom lies at the heart of *Life of Galileo*. Freedom of thought and speech is one of the central themes in the play. The play explores the tension between the pursuit of knowledge, and intellectual freedom, and the forces that seek to suppress and control such freedom. Galileo, as the protagonist of the play, embodies the quest for knowledge and scientific progress. He challenges the prevailing belief systems and presents evidence for a heliocentric model of the universe. Galileo's pursuit of truth represents the importance of intellectual curiosity and the freedom to question established doctrines. The Catholic Church, as the dominant authority during the time period depicted in the play, represents the forces of censorship and control. The Church seeks to suppress Galileo's discoveries, fearing that they will undermine its power and authority. The conflict between Galileo and the Church highlights the clash between freedom of thought and speech and the censorship imposed by institutionalized religion.

From nearly the first moment that Galileo first explains his discoveries, he is cautioned that it risks retribution from the Catholic Church. Galileo’s telescopic observations strengthened the Copernican theory that the sun lay at the centre of the universe and all other heavenly bodies orbit around it. Refuting the millennia-old Aristotelian concept of the earth being encircled by orbs that propped up the stars, these theories also contradicted the Church teachings on key biblical passages about the location of the Christian Heaven and the movement of the sun and the earth. In Brecht’s telling, Galileo is a scientist who pursues the truth regardless of the effects it may have on people, religion, and the society within which he lives. The vast institution of the Church, on the other hand, is portrayed as a regime that forces people not to see the truth,

even when they are offered a telescope. Galileo's speech is censored by the Church as he is not allowed to share his discoveries with the world.

Although he is technically allowed to think freely, he is repeatedly told that the work he is doing is wrong and that he should not be doing it. Galileo's lack of concern with the consequences of his work has him confronting papal decrees, an inquisitor armed with machines of torture, and his own desire for comfort in his life. Galileo faces a moral and personal dilemma when confronted with the choice between his scientific discoveries and his own safety. He realizes that expressing his views openly would lead to severe repercussions, including censorship and potential harm. This dilemma raises questions about the sacrifices individuals may have to make in order to protect their freedom of thought and speech.

Brecht first wrote *Life of Galileo* in Denmark in the late 1930s while in exile from his native Germany, where the Nazi regime had revoked his citizenship and burned his books. We find striking similarities as Galileo is also threatened with death by burning at the stake if his books are deemed heretical by the Church. The readers also know that further astronomical research proved Galileo to be correct and the threats and persecution that he suffered were misguided as well as unjust. An individual's right to think and write freely from censure and persecution was central to Brecht's own life experience as well as to this text. By exploring the censorship of free thought and speech imposed by the Inquisition, Brecht alludes to the censorship in his own time and country. He wrote *Life of Galileo* right after he had fled Germany, being afraid of persecution. In the 1930s, Hitler was in power, and Brecht's works were banned. It is also notable that it was not the only occasion when Brecht was faced with censorship. After he had written the play, from 1941 to 1947, when he was living in the United States, performances of Brecht's works were censored by Senator McCarthy's regime. McCarthy introduced policies against people who were suspected of communist activities. Later, when Brecht went back to Germany, the political regime in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), also censored his works.

The play explores the detrimental effects of censorship on scientific progress and human understanding. The Church's censorship of Galileo's ideas hinders the advancement of knowledge and perpetuates ignorance. Brecht criticizes the censorship that obstructs the free exchange of ideas, emphasizing the importance of an open and critical intellectual environment. The theme of freedom of thought and speech in the play also encompasses the broader issue of intellectual freedom versus societal conformity. The play questions the

pressures that individuals face to conform to prevailing ideologies and the consequences of challenging those ideologies. It underscores the need for individuals to have the freedom to express their thoughts and ideas without fear of censorship or reprisal. Overall, the theme of freedom of thought and speech versus censorship in the play highlights the struggle between the pursuit of knowledge and the oppressive forces that seek to control and silence dissent. Brecht raises important questions about the value of intellectual freedom, the dangers of censorship, and the sacrifices individuals may have to make in order to protect their right to think, question, and express themselves freely.

UNIT 16 (C): ANALYSIS OF THE MAJOR SYMBOLS

i. Galileo's Telescope

The telescope is the foundational technology that enables all of Galileo's contributions to the field of science. In the play, it also acquires a symbolic value as an instrument that allows one to see the truth, if only one is willing to look. The telescope serves as a symbol of scientific progress, intellectual curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge. The play explores the conflict between Galileo, a gifted scientist and the Catholic Church, which was deeply entrenched in traditional beliefs and authority during the seventeenth century. Galileo's invention of the telescope and his subsequent observations of the stars changed the prevailing cosmological views of the time, particularly the geocentric model supported by the Church. The telescope becomes a powerful tool that allows Galileo to gather evidence in favour of the heliocentric model proposed by Nicolaus Copernicus, which placed the Sun at the centre of the universe.

Galileo's telescope represents the division between the research – and observation-based methods of science and the blind faith and obedience that adherence to a religious regime requires. The telescope first appears simply as an instrument that can be used to see things far away. However, in Scene 4, the telescope becomes the symbol of the conflict between Galileo's research and those who wish to deny it for any reason. Galileo presents his telescope and his related discoveries to the court of the Florentine prince, Cosimo II, but not one of the members of the court is willing to look through the telescope to see what Galileo and his assistants have seen. Galileo begs them simply to look: "All anybody has to do is look," but they refuse out of fear that this instrument will show them a truth that is incompatible with what they believe.

The telescope also symbolizes a shift in perception and perspective. Through its lens, Galileo sees the world in a new light, literally and metaphorically. It represents a tool that allows individuals to see beyond the surface and perceive the underlying truths and realities that might otherwise remain hidden. This symbolizes the power of critical thinking and the ability to question the status quo. The telescope becomes a symbol of power and control in the play. Galileo's discoveries challenge the authority of the Church and the established order, and those in power seek to suppress this knowledge. The telescope represents the potential threat that scientific progress poses to established institutions and the ruling elite.

The significance of the telescope in the play lies in its ability to reveal the truth and expose the limitations of established dogma. It represents Galileo's unwavering commitment to scientific inquiry and his refusal to be silenced by the authorities. Through the telescope, Galileo sees the moons of Jupiter and the phases of Venus, providing concrete evidence that contradicts the Church's teachings. The telescope symbolizes Galileo's ability to uncover hidden truths about the universe. Through his observations, Galileo challenges the prevailing belief in the geocentric model and reveals the heliocentric nature of our solar system. The telescope becomes a tool that allows Galileo to see beyond what is apparent and exposes the limitations of traditional knowledge. The telescope becomes a catalyst for societal transformation. Galileo's discoveries, made possible by the telescope, shake the foundations of the established order. They challenge the authority of the Church and the ruling elite, as well as their control over knowledge and the dissemination of information. The telescope symbolizes the potential for scientific progress to disrupt and reshape society.

However, the telescope also becomes a source of conflict and danger for Galileo. His discoveries threaten the Church's authority and challenge the social order, leading to his confrontation with the Inquisition. The telescope becomes a symbol of the clash between scientific progress and the conservative forces of the Church and society. While the telescope brings forth new knowledge and scientific advancements, it also represents the dangers and risks associated with challenging established beliefs. Galileo's discoveries provoke the wrath of the Church and the Inquisition, leading to his persecution and eventual recantation.

Overall, the telescope in *Life of Galileo,* symbolizes the power of knowledge, enlightenment, the struggle for truth, the potential for human progress, and the tension between scientific discovery and entrenched belief systems. It highlights the challenges faced by individuals who challenge established norms and the price they may pay for pursuing their convictions. It

represents Galileo's revolutionary scientific discoveries and his pursuit of truth against the backdrop of a society dominated by religious and political authority. The telescope symbolizes the transformative potential of science and the capacity to challenge established beliefs and dogmas. The telescope can also be seen as a symbol of duality and ambiguity. While it brings knowledge and enlightenment, it also carries the potential for misuse and manipulation. Galileo's decision to withhold his discoveries under pressure represents the conflict between personal gain and the pursuit of truth, highlighting the complex ethical choices scientists often face.

ii. Pope Urban VIII's Vestments

In Scene 11, while Pope Urban VIII has a conversation with the Inquisitor, the Pope's servants dress him in papal robes for a formal appearance. The stage directions indicate that he is plainly identifiable as the former Cardinal Barberini at the beginning of the scene and almost completely obscured beneath the garments by its end. This progressive transformation visually mirrors the narrative action, where the mathematician and pro-science man, who happily debated theory with Galileo in Scene 6, is subsumed by his new role as the Pope and leader of the faithful. Under pressure in his new position, the Pope reluctantly agrees to allow the Inquisitor to interrogate Galileo and threaten him with torture in order to convince him to recant his theories. The vestments symbolize the disappearance of the person into the role of the Pope and the power of the office to subsume the person who occupies it.

Pope Urban VIII's vestments carry manifold symbolic significance, representing the authority and power of the Catholic Church, as well as the conflicts between religion and science. The vestments worn by Pope Urban VIII serve as a visual representation of the Church's authority and the power vested in religious figures. When Pope Urban VIII appears in his elaborate and ornate vestments, it underscores the grandeur and hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church. The Pope's vestments also symbolize the adherence to religious orthodoxy and the preservation of traditional beliefs within the Catholic Church. The opulence and design of the vestments reflect centuries of religious tradition and the sense of continuity and stability associated with the Church's teachings. They represent the established dogma and rituals that the Church seeks to protect and uphold.

The significance of the Pope's vestments is particularly highlighted in the context of Galileo's interactions with him. As Galileo engages in discussions and debates with the Pope, the contrast

between the simplicity of Galileo's attire and the opulence of the Pope's vestments becomes apparent. This contrast emphasizes the stark difference between the pursuit of scientific truth and the institutionalized power of the Church. The vestments worn by the Pope also symbolize the power to coerce individuals into conformity and submission. In the play, when Galileo is forced to recant his scientific discoveries, the Pope's vestments serve as a reminder of the institutional authority that compels Galileo to abandon his pursuit of truth and conform to the Church's teachings. They represent the pressures and threats faced by those who challenge established beliefs and the sacrifice of intellectual freedom for the sake of conformity.

Furthermore, the vestments represent the Church's control over knowledge and the suppression of scientific advancements that challenge religious dogma. As Galileo presents his heliocentric theories, the Pope's vestments become a visual symbol of the Church's resistance to change and its desire to maintain control over society's beliefs and perceptions of the natural world. They embody the institution's efforts to suppress ideas that conflict with religious doctrine and to maintain its authority over matters of science and knowledge. In the later part of the play, when Galileo recants his scientific discoveries under pressure from the Church, the vestments worn by the Pope serve as a reminder of the authority that coerces Galileo into submission. The vestments symbolize the institutional power that compels Galileo to renounce his scientific findings and symbolically abandon the pursuit of truth.

The vestments symbolize the hierarchical structure of religious institutions and their control over knowledge and the suppression of scientific progress. The elaborate and ornate nature of the vestments reflects the grandeur and importance associated with the Pope's role. They represent the position of power held by the Pope and his ability to exert influence and make decisions that shape the Church's doctrine. The contrast between Galileo's modest attire and the opulence of the Pope's vestments underscores the conflicts between religion and science, and the struggle for intellectual freedom in the face of religious orthodoxy.

iii. The Old Woman/Witch

In Scene 14, while Andrea is smuggling Galileo's books out of Italy, he encounters a boy who is tormenting a woman he claims to be a witch. When Andrea asks him what he is doing, the boy relates stories that "prove" she is a witch, and Andrea refutes each of them with a logical explanation. Finally, Andrea lifts the boy to the window, proving that the shadow that appears

to prove she is stirring "hellbroth" is in fact simply a shadow of an old woman stirring soup with a big ladle (not a broomstick).

The old woman who is called a witch represents the marginalized and oppressed individuals in society, particularly those who are deemed as threats to the established order. The symbol of the witch serves as a representation of individuals who are repressed and persecuted by oppressive systems. During the time the play is set, accusations of witchcraft were used as a means to silence and punish those who challenged established beliefs or posed a threat to religious or political authorities. Her presence in the play serves as a critique of the prevailing social and political structures that suppress and persecute those who deviate from the norms or challenge the status quo. The character of the old woman reflects the harsh treatment faced by individuals who express unconventional ideas or beliefs. She is labelled as a witch, a common accusation used during the time to silence and condemn those who were seen as threats to the Church or ruling authorities. By incorporating this character, Brecht highlights the suppression of dissent and the consequences faced by those who dare to question or challenge prevailing societal norms and power structures.

The old woman also represents a source of alternative knowledge and wisdom. Despite being marginalized and persecuted, she possesses insights and perspectives that challenge the dominant narrative. Her presence serves as a reminder that wisdom and knowledge can come from unexpected sources, often overlooked or dismissed by those in power. The labellingof the old woman as a witch creates an ironic juxtaposition with Galileo's own journey. The witch can also be seen as an allegory for Galileo himself and the challenges he faces. While Galileo faces persecution for his scientific discoveries, he eventually renounces his findings to protect himself. In contrast, the old woman, who is genuinely labelled as a witch, remains steadfast in her beliefs and refuses to conform. This irony serves as a critique of those who compromise their ideals and abandon the pursuit of truth for personal gain or self-preservation.

The witch symbolizes the dark side of human nature and the capacity for cruelty and prejudice. The accusations of witchcraft and the subsequent persecution and torture of alleged witches serve as a reminder of the injustices and atrocities committed in the name of preserving power and enforcing conformity. The witch's presence serves as a critique of the irrationality and destructive potential within society.

The old woman's refusal to renounce her beliefs despite the consequences symbolizes resistance against oppression. She embodies the spirit of individuals who, even in the face of persecution, maintain their integrity and stand up for their convictions. Her character serves as a call to resist oppression and to remain steadfast in the pursuit of truth, even in the most adverse circumstances. The witch is an outsider, positioned on the fringes of society, and represents those who are marginalized due to their unconventional ideas, beliefs, or actions. Overall, the character of the old woman who is called a witch in *Galileo* represents the marginalized, the persecuted, and the defiant individuals who challenge oppressive systems. Through her presence, Brecht critiques the suppression of dissent, highlights alternative sources of knowledge and wisdom, and underscores the importance of resilience and resistance in the face of adversity.

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SUGGESTED READING

1. Stephen Parker – *Bertolt Brecht: A Literary Life*
2. John Willett – *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht*
3. Stephen Unwin – *A Guide to the Plays of Bertolt Brecht*
4. Ekkehard Schall – *The Crft of Theatre: Seminar and Discussions in Breechtian Theatre*
5. David Barnett – *Bertolt Brecht: Critical and Primary Sources*
6. Anthony Squiers – *An Introduction to the Social and Political Philosophy of Bertolt Brecht*

ASSIGNMENTS

1. What do you know about the ‘Epic Theatre’? Describe in detail its major features.
2. Trace the elements of the ‘Epic Theatre’ in Bertolt Brecht’s *Life of Galileo*.
3. Attempt a critical assessment of the character of Galileo Galilei.
4. Analyze the changes that you find in the father-daughter relationship between Galileo and Virginia as manifested in the play.
5. Do you find similarities between Brecht’s portrayal of the hardship faced by Galileo and his own life? Investigate into the historical context of the play.
6. What moral and social responsibilities a scientist must embody according to Brecht?
7. Does Brecht attempt to represent scientific ideas as a kind of contagious infection and the spread of which cannot be repressed by any authorities?

8. Critically comment on the conflict between scientific progress and religious tradition which is a focal thematic concern of the play.
9. Investigate into the theme of freedom of thought and speech versus censorship as represented in the play.
10. What does the telescope, invented by Galileo, signify in the play?
11. How would you evaluate the symbol of Pope Urban VIII's vestments?
12. What does the old woman who is labelled as a witch symbolize at the end of the play?